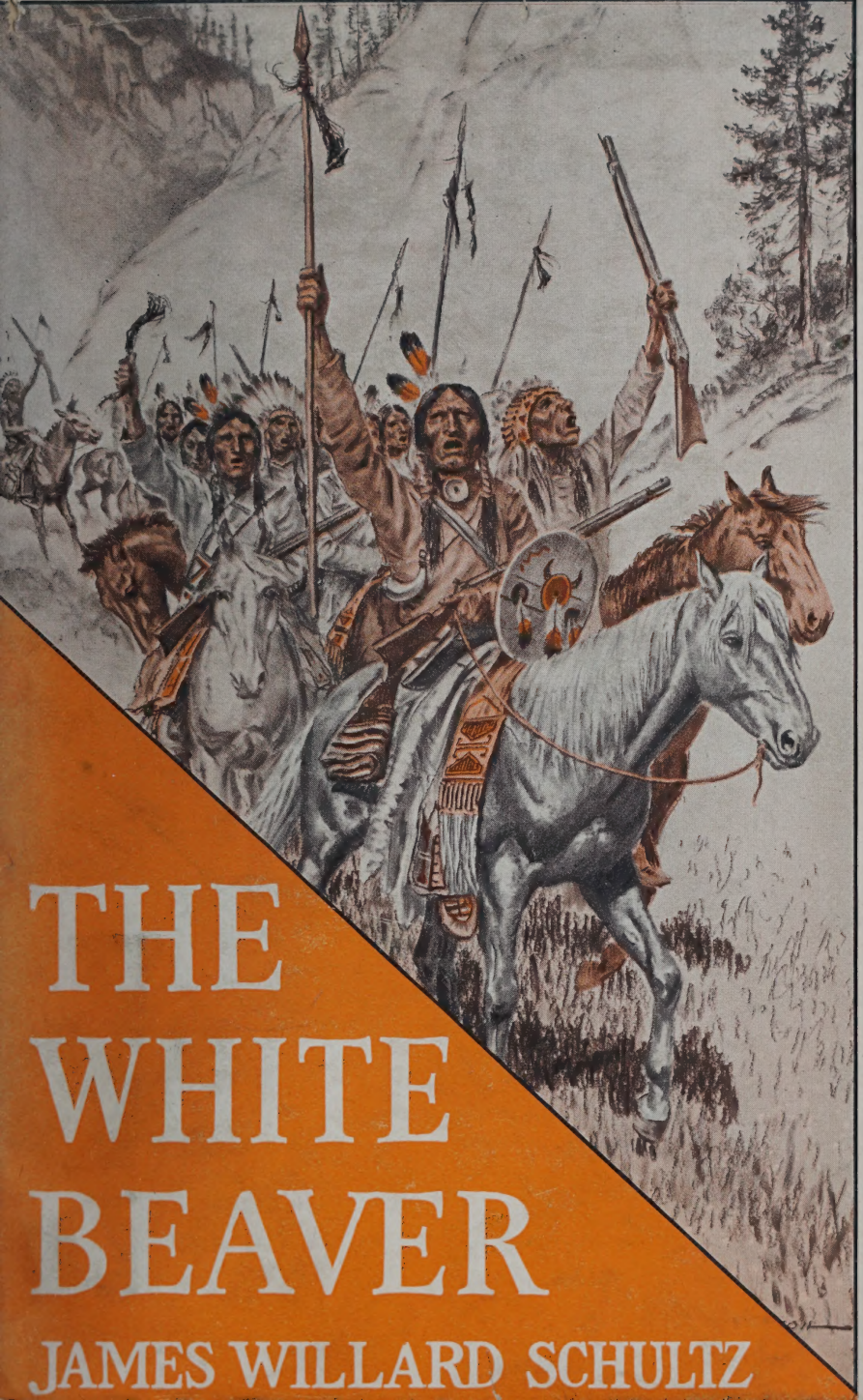

THE WHITE BEAVER

JAMES WILLARD SCHULTZ

$1.75

THE WHITE BEAVER

By James Willard Schultz

MR. SCHULTZ takes for the hero of his new story of Indian life Richard Ellis, a boy born in St. Louis in 1845. When he was fifteen, Richard and his father set out on a trading venture up the Missouri, which brought them in time to Fort Benton and the country of the Blackfeet. Part of the story is plainly based on Mr. Schultz's own experience, for he takes young Richard into the Blackfeet tribe itself. With his Indian companions, whose life he comes to love, the white youth meets adventure by land and water, on the plains and in the snowy foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Most exciting of all, however, is the series of adventures that accompany his pursuit of the White Beaver, the medicine animal that has long evaded the traps and arrows of the Indian hunters. This is a truly wonderful story of frontier life. The spirited illustrations are by Rodney Thomson.

THE WHITE BEAVER

JAMES WILLARD SCHULTZ

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The White Beaver

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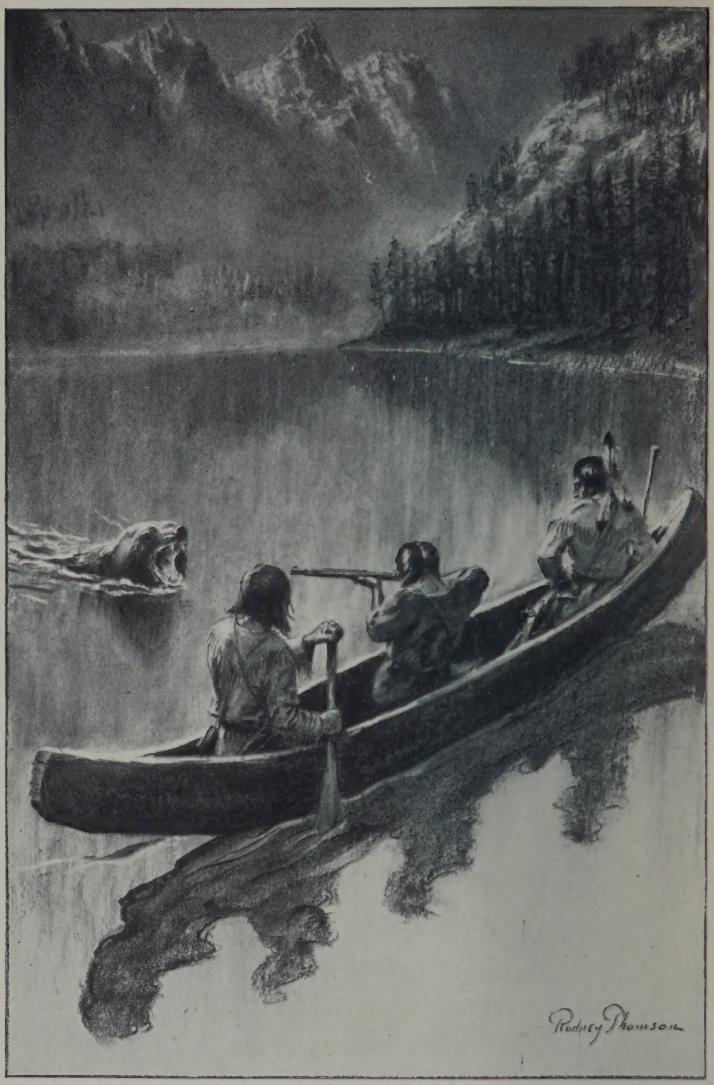


THAT TERRIBLE, OPEN-MOUTHED HEAD SURGED NEARER AND NEARER (*page* 140)

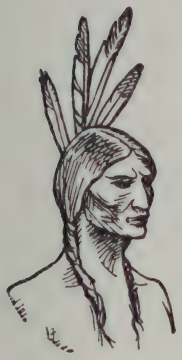
THE WHITE BEAVER

BY

JAMES WILLARD SCHULTZ

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

RODNEY THOMSON



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THE WHITE BEAVER

CHAPTER I

I ACQUIRE TWO INDIAN MOTHERS

EVERY story that I have read has had an introduction; a statement, if you please, of whom the story is about and of what they are to do. My introduction to this story shall be as brief as possible; would that I could leave it out altogether!

I was born in St. Louis, Missouri, January 5, 1845. My father, Charles Stoneham Ellis, was a member of an old Rhode Island family, and my sweet mother was, before her marriage to my father, Amélie Marie de la Rue, a daughter of a fine old Creole family of New Orleans. It was there that my father met her. They fell in love and her people forbade her marrying a Yankee and a Protestant at that, so they simply ran away, and were married, and came to St. Louis, where my father became an innkeeper. I have never met any of my mother's family nor my father's either.

We were a very happy family of three. All went well with us. My father had a good and increasing

trade with the traders and trappers who came to St. Louis every spring to dispose of their furs. My mother loved our little home and made it very pleasant for us. I was sent early to school and made good progress in my studies. Alas! In my fourteenth year my mother was taken down with a fever and she never recovered from it. We grieved terribly over our loss, my father and I, and I now know that he all but went crazy for a time. He neglected his business and it began to fall away.

Often he would say to me: 'I can't bear to live here any longer! I shall sell out! We will go far away to some new country!'

Particular friends of ours were Antoine Bissette and Henri Nadeau, free trappers. That is to say, they trapped for themselves and not for the American Fur Company, which had almost a monopoly of the trading and trapping business all the long way up the Missouri River and its tributaries to the very crest of the Rocky Mountains. Antoine and Henri came to St. Louis every other spring with a bateau-load of furs, the result of two seasons' catch, and always stopped with us while in town. They came in the spring following my mother's death, and, true friends that they were, grieved with us over our loss. My father told them that they were stopping with us for the last time;

that he was about to dispose of the inn and go to some other town where he would not so constantly be reminded of his years of happiness, gone from him forever.

'Well, Charles,' said Antoine, 'if you are bound to do this then you will come with us. You will have capital; we have some; we will enter into partnership with you in the Indian trade.'

'But my son Richard — he must go to school. I cannot leave him,' my father objected.

'He shall pack his books and come with us. He can study them without the aid of a schoolmaster, and he will be useful to us,' Henri answered.

My father turned to me: 'Will you promise to study hard if we take you with us?' he asked.

'Yes! Yes!' I cried. 'Only let me go with you, and I will study hard. Buy a large box of books for me, and I will learn every one of them by heart!'

There followed a long discussion of ways and means, and before we went to bed the matter was settled. My father was to sell the inn and enter into partnership in the fur trade with our friends, and I was to go with them. I was so excited over the prospect that I could not sleep. That I was to see the country of the Far West, its Indian tribes and its game, seemed too good to be true.

The very next day my father sold the inn for

twelve thousand dollars, part cash and the balance on two years' time, and within a month from that date we all left St. Louis on the steamboat Emilie, which had in her hold ten tons of merchandise, mostly Indian trade goods, belonging to us. Closely following us was a smaller boat, the Shreveport. Both of the craft were owned by Captain Joseph La Barge and his partners, and they were the first 'opposition boats' ever to arrive in Fort Benton. 'Opposition boats' meant in opposition to the boats of the American Fur Company, which up to that time had had a monopoly of steamboating on the Upper Missouri. One of the Company's boats, the Spread Eagle, left St. Louis three days ahead of us. We overtook her not far from the Arickaree village, and when her captain saw that we were about to take the lead he tried to sink us by ramming the bow of his boat into ours, and almost succeeded in doing it. We had a very narrow escape. Indeed, he would have sunk us had not Captain La Barge and Antoine and Henri and others leveled their guns at him and his pilot and threatened to shoot if he did not at once shut off steam. He obeyed that order, and we went on, the Shreveport following us, and we saw no more of him and his boat.

Imagine what that twenty-three-hundred-mile

voyage into the Great West was to me! I saw many tribes of Indians, and thousands and thousands of buffalo and other game animals. All my visions of the great country, all my longings for it, were more than fulfilled. Undoubtedly I was the happiest and most excited boy in all the world! I wished that the voyage would never end, but end it did, on June 17, 1862, on our thirty-second day out from St. Louis.

On the afternoon of that day we were set on shore with our goods at Fort Benton, the head of navigation, and right in the midst, as it were, of a camp of about six thousand Indians of the Blackfeet tribes. Below us a little way was the adobe fort owned by the American Fur Company, and nearer were three or four small houses of adobe and of logs, signs upon them advertising that they were hotels and saloons. That was all there was of Fort Benton in that year.

We put up at one of the hotels. Its guest-rooms were the great out-of-doors, and the bedding was that which the travelers themselves carried with them. The table fare was, for breakfast, buffalo meat, beans, coffee, bread, and stewed dried apples; and for dinner and supper it was the same. The price of a single meal was two dollars.

The shelves of the trade-room of the fort of the

American Fur Company were bare of goods, and here were we with ten tons of goods, powder and ball, tobacco, knives, and trinkets, for which the Indians were clamoring. They swarmed around us with buffalo robes, beaver skins, and pelts of other fur animals, begging Antoine and Henri to take them in exchange for the things they wanted. Both men spoke Blackfeet fluently, having lived with the Pi-ku'ni tribe of the Confederacy a number of winters.

After they had talked with the chiefs for a few moments, they turned to my father, and Henri said to him: 'Charles, these Pi-ku'ni chiefs and their warriors are our true friends. Antoine and I have been with them for a number of seasons, traveling and hunting and trapping with them, and even fighting their enemies with them. They are asking us to trade with them, and then go south with them. Let us do that. If we make haste we can dispose of our goods before night, and ship the furs we get down-river on the Shreveport, which will not be leaving until to-morrow. Now, what say you to this?'

'It shall be as you two say,' my father answered.

'Then right here we do our trading!' Antoine shouted, and, seizing a sharp axe, he began knocking off the cover of a box of the goods.

At that we all fell to the work, opening the boxes, dumping their contents out upon the ground, and setting the boxes in a protecting circle around the scattered goods. Antoine and Henri did the trading, and my father and I helped them hand out the various things that were called for.

Never had we worked so fast; buffalo robes and beaver pelts, wolf and other skins came in a perfect stream over our circular counter of boxes, and in a stream our goods were handed out over it. Ten tons of goods is a lot, but at sunset we had sold all that we cared to dispose of, reserving for ourselves only a good supply of powder and ball, some beaver traps, and a quantity of tobacco. And what a pile of furs we had! There was no time to bale them for shipping. As the boat hands carried them aboard my father and the boat clerk checked them off, and when the last of the furs were stowed away, we learned that, for our goods, which, with the freighting of them at fifteen cents a pound, had cost nine thousand dollars, we had, at the lowest estimate, thirty thousand dollars' worth of fur and robes!

Captain La Barge agreed to be responsible for them, and to sell them at the best prices he could obtain, and his word, as every one knew, was as good as a recorded deed. He planned to make two

trips to Fort Benton with his boats in the next summer, and it was then and there agreed that my father should go to St. Louis with our winter catch of furs on the first of his down-river boats, and return with a large assortment of goods for the trade. I did not see the boats depart. I was asleep when they pulled out at daylight the next morning.

There followed many days of idleness for us. On the fourth day the Spread Eagle arrived, and the Indians flocked to the fort day after day to trade for the goods that it had brought up the river. Even then they had not half of what they wanted in the way of guns, powder and ball, and other things, and they waited to trade for what a second Company boat, the Yellowstone, was bringing.

During this time of waiting, Antoine and Henri bought of the Indians a saddle horse for my father, and one for me. We had saddles and bridles and spurs that we had brought with us, and I was a happy boy when my lively little horse was saddled for me, and I got on him and rode with Henri and Antoine and my father over to the Teton River, where now the greater part of the Indians were encamped.

All up and down the timbered bottoms of the stream, as far as we could see, were scattered the

buffalo leather lodges of the Pi-ku'ni. We paused at the edge of the slope overlooking them, and I heard Henri say to Antoine: 'There it is, the lodge of Mad Plume. Our lodge, then, must be just back of it in the timber.'

I looked where Henri pointed and saw a large lodge upon which were painted in black two life-size buffalo, and above them the lodge-skin was banded with four wide strips in black, red, yellow, and blue. We rode down the slope and passed it, and the women and children working and playing in front of it, and just back of it came to an equally large, but plain lodge that stood in the shade of a tall, wide-branching cottonwood.

As we halted before it and dismounted, two young and very handsome women came running from the brush behind it, and one of them embraced and kissed Henri, the other doing the same to Antoine, while my father and I stood staring at them open-mouthed.

'It is a little surprise for you and Richard,' said Henri, turning to us, his right arm still encircling the young woman's waist. 'This, my friends, is Pi'ta-ki, or, as we say, Eagle Woman. My woman, my friends.'

'And this is my little woman, Ki'to-ki-ah-ki (Grouse Woman). I make you acquainted with

her,' said Antoine, and said something to her in Blackfeet.

At that both women advanced timidly and shook hands with my father as they gave him greeting. I think that he frightened them, for he did not smile as he simply said to them in French: 'Bonjour, Madame Bissette. Bonjour, Madame Nadeau.' They hurried on from him to me, and me they kissed, and said something that at least sounded very pleasant, spoken as it was in their soft Blackfeet tongue.

Well, I kissed them, even as they had kissed me, for somehow my heart had gone out to them the moment I saw them coming from the brush; and as I did so, I noticed that my father stared at me as though he was not well pleased.

'They say this to you, Richard,' Henri explained. '"Welcome, motherless one! We have heard much of you! We shall be mothers to you!"'

'Ha!' cried my father, and clapped a hand to his eyes, and turned away from us, deeply affected by what he had heard.

On my part I was more than pleased at the greeting they gave me. I thought them young enough to be my sisters; they were but little older than I. But if they wanted to be mothers to me, I was glad that they should be, and I said so; Antoine in-

terpreted to them my answer. Whereupon they ranged themselves on each side of me and escorted me into the big lodge, the men closely following us.

As I entered it through the curtain-hung, narrow little doorway, I was much delighted with its appearance of compact comfort and neatness, the truly artistic manner in which it was furnished. It was about twenty feet in diameter. Its lining, or inner lodge-skin, of soft tanned elk leather rose to a height all around, of about six feet, and was decorated with most pleasing barbaric designs, geometrical figures in bright paint of various colors. At the back of it — that is, opposite the doorway — were two raised thick wide couches or beds, of buffalo robes and clean white blankets, and at the head and the foot of each couch, supported by a painted wooden tripod, was a slanting back-rest of willow sticks of uniform size, the edges bound with leather. There was also a similar couch on the right, and on the left of the circle and in the center was the stone-rimmed fireplace. On each side of the lodge, between the doorway and the couches, were piled a number of parfleches, stiff rawhide, large, envelope-shaped pouches, also beautifully decorated with geometrical designs in bright colors. These contained the property of the

occupants, clothing, food, and various things of domestic use.

When we entered the lodge my new-found 'mothers' led me to the couch on the right of the circle and sat me down upon it with a few words. Henri interpreted them to me. 'They say that that is your couch,' he explained, 'that they hope your dreams will all be good when you sleep upon it.'

'And that, Charles,' he went on, turning to my father, 'that couch there on the left is yours.'

He passed on and sat down upon the couch at the back that was nearest mine, and Eagle Woman ran and took her place beside him, Antoine and his Grouse Woman seating themselves upon the other couch.

'Well, Charles, well, Richard,' said Antoine, 'what think you of this — is it not truly comfortable, this little prairie home of ours?'

We both said that it was, and he went on to explain that we should find it perfectly comfortable in the far-below-zero weather of winter. He showed us that the lodge lining was all around weighted to the ground by the couches, parfleches, and other things, and that the space between it and the outer skin — of the width of the lodge-poles — carried the cold air to releasement far above our heads, and at the same time created a draft that forced the

smoke of the fire straight up and out from the hole at the top; and, further, that this smoke-hole was protected by two great flaps, or ears, that could be shifted one way and another according to the way the wind was blowing. Thus the smoke was always prevented from being blown back down into the lodge.

The women now went to their parfleches near the doorway, opened several of them, and soon set before us little dishes of food that had a most strange appearance, but which was of fine flavor. It comprised pieces of thin dried meat, strips of dried buffalo back-fat, snow-white and sweet, and used by the people of the plains as we use butter. But best of all were the lumps of pemmican they gave us: finely pounded dried meat mixed with marrow grease, and slightly flavored with mint. We all relished our lunch. I thought that I had never eaten one that was more to my liking. Perhaps that was because of my romantic surroundings.

'How long have you had these wives?' my father asked our friends.

'Four years,' Henri answered. 'Four happy years. They have boundless love for us, and we for them. They are of such good heart! And of neatness beyond words. You shall see for yourselves

what good care they take of us and our little belongings. And now that you have come, they will take equal care of you and Richard.'

My father looked at them, at their plain gowns of blue trade cloth, low-necked, short-sleeved, short-skirted, and belted at the waist, and remarked: 'Well, I don't see why you don't have them dress differently! Why don't you give them pretty print goods, and have them make the cloth into dresses, white women's style? And why not give them shoes and hats?'

'Charles, you are very green!' Antoine laughed. 'What! put calico upon them — to be torn to shreds the first time they go out into the timber to gather wood for the lodge fire? What! cramp and chafe their pretty little feet with shoes? No, no, my friend. And hats! Ha! Now, wouldn't they look ridiculous with the flimsy, gaudy things perched upon the top of their smooth combed hair done into those long, heavy braids that fall down to their knees!'

'Maybe you are right,' said my father.

'We have a most convenient arrangement with our father-in-law, Mad Plume,' Henri volunteered. 'He is a great medicine man, and chief of the Lone Eaters Band, or gens, of the Pi-ku'ni. When we are away, he has one of his women — our mother-in-

law—and his son, live in this lodge with our women, and help them when moving camp and in every other way. We never have to worry about them; during the long trips that we have made to St. Louis and back, we have been absolutely sure that they were safe, and well supplied with meat.'

'But where do you get the horses necessary to move this great lodge and all that is in it?' my father wanted to know.

'Ha! Horses!' Henri laughed. 'Would you believe it! Our women have between them something like eighty head of horse stock, and I know not how many colts of this spring. We have a half-dozen or so horses in the band, all swift buffalo-runners, as you shall soon see.'

As Henri finished speaking, there entered the lodge a youth of about my own age; a strikingly handsome youth, clad in shirt and leggins of well-tanned elk leather, and wearing beautiful quill-embroidered moccasins upon his small, well-shaped feet. It was truly remarkable, I thought, what wonderfully small and perfectly shaped hands and feet these Indians had. The youth paused a moment after entering, smiling and looking from one to another of us, and Henri said something to him, while at the same time Antoine said to me: 'Richard, arise and greet your friend-to-be, our

brother-in-law, Kut-aw'mak-an, or, as we say it, No Runner.'

I stood up as the youth came toward me, expecting to shake hands with him, but to my very great surprise he embraced and kissed me, and I was confused enough as I sank back upon the couch, the youth sitting down beside me and saying something to Henri.

'He greeted you in the ancient way,' Henri told me. 'He says that he is very glad you are going to live with us, and that he is sure you and he will be great friends.'

'Tuk'ahks' (friends), Henri added, 'means more in Blackfeet than it does in French or English. When a man of the Blackfeet tribes says that he is a friend of some one, he means that each of them will make any kind of sacrifice for the other, even of life itself. Blackfeet friends are inseparable; in camp, in the hunt, when traveling, and on the war trail, where one is, there also is the other. I am glad that No Runner has at sight of you declared himself your friend. We know him; a braver, truer youth never lived; you will soon learn what a true friend you have made this day!'

As you shall see before this tale is ended, Henri was right. Never better friend did any one have than No Runner was to me.

I Acquire Two Indian Mothers

Again the youth addressed me, Henri interpreting: 'Two powerful and fast buffalo horses are mine. One of them, a black, I give you. Also I give you a strong, gentle, fat sorrel that is in my band. He is truly gentle; he will stand and wait for you wherever you leave him, and he is not afraid of game, not even of bears.'

Such generosity overwhelmed me. I did not know what to say. I was embarrassed. Henri came to my rescue: 'Tell him that you are very glad to know him, that you are his friend from this day, and that you are glad to have the horses,' he said, and I did so.

'This pleases me very much,' said my father. 'We must make some return to the youth for his generosity. What shall Richard give him, my friends?'

'He has no gun,' said Henri.

'And wants one above all things,' said Antoine.

'A gun it shall be!' said my father; 'and plenty of powder and balls and caps with it. Richard shall give him my extra rifle!'

'We must be getting back to the river. We will have No Runner go with us, and Richard can hand him the weapon,' said Antoine, and we were soon on our way.

It was good to see No Runner's delight when I handed him the gun. He stroked it and fondled it

as a woman does her first-born babe; and then, when I added to the present a can of powder, a sack of balls, and five boxes of caps, he set them all in a pile and embraced me again, but said nothing. He was too happy to speak.

On the following day the Pi-ku'ni broke camp and started for the south. It was about ten o'clock when the lead of the several-miles-long cavalcade of riders, of travois-horses, pack-horses, and bands of loose horses came down into the bottom and began fording the river, and it was past noon when the tail-end of it passed. We had early made up our bedding, traps, ammunition, tobacco, and personal belongings into convenient bundles for packing, and had saddled our riding-horses; but it was late — long after the fording began — when Eagle Woman, Grouse Woman, and No Runner came to us with the pack-horses and travois-horses that were to carry our things. The women dismounted and began loading some of the stuff upon a travois, and my father sprang forward to assist them.

'No, Charles, you must not do that,' Antoine told him, laying a detaining hand upon his shoulder. 'What they are doing is women's work, and we must not put a hand to it. To do so would shame them, and the men would despise us if they saw us helping them. As the men love their work, hunting,

bringing in meat and skins to the lodge, and herding their horses, so do the women love their work, and they resent any interference with it.'

'It seems to me that the women do all the work,' said my father.

'All the camp work, yes,' Antoine answered. 'They care for the lodge, bring the wood and water, cook the food, and tan the leather for the family clothing, and look out for their children. But what of that? There isn't a woman of this tribe who does as much real hard work in a week as a white farmer's wife does in a day!'

Antoine was right. Compared with the servantless white women of the country, the Indian women of the buffalo days led lives of luxurious ease!

Well, as soon as the women had packed our belongings upon the horses we all mounted, and crossed the ford in the wake of the long cavalcade that was wending its way like a huge snake up out of the narrow valley and out upon the great plain. I rode with Henri and my new-found friend, No Runner, and helped them herd along a noble band of horses, owned mostly by Mad Plume and the members of his family, and among them No Runner pointed out the fast buffalo horse and the fat, gentle hunter that he had given me. I was so filled with happiness that it hurt!

CHAPTER II

THE SIGN LANGUAGE

At about five o'clock that evening, we arrived at the edge of the plain overlooking the beautiful, timbered valley of the Shonkin River, a small stream putting into the Missouri just below Fort Benton, and Antoine bade us halt and dismount and watch the people make camp. As far up and down the winding valley as we could see, it was already filled with the swarming mass of people and horses and dogs, apparently moving about in utter confusion. But Henri explained that there was no confusion about it; that every band or gens of the tribe had its own particular place in the great camp circle, and that each family was driving and leading its pack- and travois-horses to unload at the exact place at which its lodge was to stand.

In an incredibly short time we saw the thousands of horses unpacked and turned loose, and of their own accord each band gathered by itself, and struck out, first to drink at the stream and then to graze off up the valley slope. A few minutes later, the lodges sprang up as if by magic, gleaming white against the dark green of the timber and the sage-

brush bottom-land, and smoke began to mount from them into the still evening air as we got onto our horses and rode down toward them. We soon came to Mad Plume's lodge, the lodge of the buffalo medicine, and then to our lodge, set up just back of it. We dismounted and unsaddled, and No Runner drove our animals to their band. We entered our little home and found everything in readiness for us, our couches spread, our various belongings in neat piles along the wall spaces, and the women preparing to cook our evening meal.

But we were not to eat there. 'Listen!' said Antoine, as, somewhere near by, a man began to shout out something in a clear, deep, and pleasant-sounding voice.

'It is Mad Plume, shouting invitations to certain friends to come and feast with him,' Henri explained. 'And, yes, as I thought, he names Antoine and me, and tells us to bring to the feast and smoke our white men friends. Well, we will go after a few minutes. We must give Mad Plume's wife, our mother-in-law, time to get out of our way.'

'What is the trouble with her?' my father asked.

'Nothing! So far as we know, she is a fine, generous woman,' Henri answered. 'We have never met her. The Blackfeet rule is that a man must not under any circumstances meet his mother-in-

law. Ours often visits in our lodge while we are out for the day, and upon our return to camp, we have to make sure that she is not with our women before we enter.'

'Ha! What a queer law that is!' my father laughed. 'I know a few men in St. Louis who would be right strong for it!'

Well, we presently went over to Mad Plume's lodge, and, entering, found a dozen or more men assembled there, all of them, as I afterward learned, chiefs of different clans of the Pi-ku'ni, and including Big Lake, chief of the Small Robes Clan, and head chief of the tribe. He was a tall, slender, pleasant-featured man of about forty years. Our host, Mad Plume, was also tall, but of much heavier build and more deliberate movement and speech. All of the men were plainly dressed in clothing of soft buffalo or deer or elk leather, the one exception being their moccasins, which were beautifully embroidered with colored porcupine-quill work. Let me say right here that Indians never wore their beautiful beaded and painted and fur- and scalp-fringed clothing, and their eagle-feather headdresses, except upon ceremonial occasions.

When we entered the lodge, Mad Plume and the others called out to us, 'Ok'yi! Ok'yi!' (the term

for welcome), and room was made for Henri and Antoine and my father here and there between certain of the chiefs, where I, a mere youth, had no right to sit. My friend No Runner, sitting near the doorway, motioned me to a seat beside him. I took it, and a girl came in and gave me a pleasant smile and 'Ok'yi' of greeting as she seated herself on my left.

She was a year or two younger than I, slender, graceful in all her movements; and I thought her face, with its large, soft, expressive, long-lashed eyes, the most beautiful that I had ever seen.

No Runner called to Henri and said something to him, and he interpreted to me: 'No Runner says to you: "This is my sister, Kak-at-os'ah-ki,[1] and so she is your almost-sister. I am sure that you will be a good almost-brother to her."'

'Yes, that I will,' I answered, and offered the girl my hand. She did not appear to understand what the gesture meant, so I took her hand and shook it, and at that everybody laughed and confused us both, the girl quickly shielding her face in her leather-robe wrap, or toga, for a moment or two, until she was called to help the women set the food before the guests. We were each given generous portions of pemmican and dried service

[1] Kak-at-os'ah-ki (Star Woman).

berries, and while we ate, Mad Plume busied himself preparing a mixture of tobacco and *l'herbe* for the smoking that was to follow the feast. Blackfeet hosts never ate with their guests; they looked out for their wants and kept the conversation going.

During the feast, Mad Plume called upon my father to state something of his plans, and he replied, Henri interpreting, that it was his intention to trap and hunt with the Pi-ku'ni during the winter, and in the spring go down the river after a lot of goods to trade to them at reasonable prices.

'You say that you want to hunt and trap with us. Well, supposing that we find the Crows, or Snake People, or other enemies camping in our country, what will you do then?' Big Lake asked.

'I shall do whatever you do. If you fight them, you will find me fighting right by your side; and if you run from them, you will see me running so fast that an enemy arrow cannot overtake me!' my father answered.

Every one laughed at his answer, and after a moment or two Big Lake said, very soberly: 'Men who joke and laugh are always brave. You and your son are very welcome in our tribe. I give you a name; you shall have my first name, a name that

carried me through my early war adventures and brought me success: you are Ap'ah-mait-si!' [1]

'Oh-ho-hai! A good name! Welcome, Ap'ah-mait-si!' one and another of the guests cried, clapping their hands, and thus was my father named.

'His son, too, must have a name,' Big Lake continued. 'Mad Plume, I think that you should give it. Powerful medicine man that you are, I feel that a name given the boy by you will bring him good luck.'

Henri was interpreting all this talk to us, and now, while Mad Plume considered what name to give me, I became so excited, so eager to know what it was to be, that I could hardly bear the suspense. He was long in giving it. I fidgeted in my seat.

At last he said: 'Only four nights back — oh, sacred number! — I had a powerful dream. I — my shadow — went forth from my body and traveled over a wide plain, and down into a deep stream-valley where I rested in a grove of cottonwoods. Alone I had gone on a raid against the enemy. I had been surprised by them, had shot away all my arrows and barely escaped with my life, and this was my fourth day — oh, sacred number! — on my homeward trail. Game there

[1] Ap'ah-mait-si (Weasel-in-the-Bunch); meaning a weasel skin in a bunch of many skins of the kind.

was in plenty on all sides of me — buffalo, antelope, deer, elk — but, lacking arrows, I could not make a kill, and so I was starving; so weak from hunger that I could go no farther. Therefore I began to pray, calling upon all the gods, all those of the sky and the earth and the deep waters, to give me help. I prayed, and looked and listened for an answer to my prayer. None came. Four times I prayed — oh, sacred number! — and then, right after I had finished the fourth prayer, I heard above me the swish! swish! swish! swish! of wings. I looked up and saw a large raven flying toward me and carrying something in its beak, something so large that it was almost the size of the bird, and so heavy that it was all that the black traveler of the air could do to keep going with it. And what do you think that raven did? He came straight over me and dropped his burden; it fell close beside me and I reached out and took it, a piece of buffalo meat of good size! And having dropped it, the raven called down to me: "I take pity upon you! Eat, and go your homeward way!"

"'O sacred bird! O generous raven!" I cried. "Where did you get this real food? What one of the gods told you to bring it to me?"

'I got no answer; even as I cried out to it, the shining black one turned and flew off whence it had

come, not once looking down at me; nevertheless, I vowed a sacrifice to him. I ate a little of the meat and went on my way with new strength. And each day eating the smallest possible portion of it, I kept my strength and at last arrived at my lodge. My friends, I name this white youth here with us: he is Ahk'sap-as-to!'

Thus did I get my name, Ahk'sap-as-to (Generous Raven). My father and Henri and Antoine smiled as they approved it, and the other guests cried out as one man, 'Generous Raven, medicine-dream-named, live to extreme old age!'

Ah, how pleased I was over that naming of me! And how important! I imagined myself already a great hunter and warrior of the tribe! I learned in time that the medicine men generally named the male children after some animal or incident of their dreams. Female children were usually named in the same way by an old woman relative or friend of the father and mother.

Mad Plume now filled a large pipe-bowl of polished black stone with some of the mixture that he had prepared, tamping it well down, fitted a long stem to the bowl, and passed the completed pipe to the man next on his left to light. As he did so, Henri called my father's and my attention to the manner in which he did it, holding the stem in

both closed hands, the backs up. Only medicine men, he said, passed and received the pipe in that manner, which was in imitation of a bear grasping an object with both paws. Laymen, even the greatest chiefs, received the pipe and passed it with one hand.

Having merely lighted the pipe, the guest passed it back to Mad Plume. He took a long whiff from it, and, pointing the stem toward the sky, blew the smoke in that direction, calling upon the Sun and all the other 'Above People' to pity us all. He then took another mouthful of smoke which he blew to the earth as he pointed the stem to it, and called upon 'Our Mother' to pity us. Lastly, he pointed the stem to the four world directions, north, south, east, and west, and then the pipe was passed from hand to hand to the man on the extreme left of the three-quarter circle, who offered a short prayer before he smoked it for a moment or two. From him it was smoked by man after man around the row of the guests to the extreme right end of the assemblage, and then passed directly back from hand to hand to be smoked from one to another as before, and until it was smoked out. Whereupon Mad Plume received it, cleaned it out, and allowed it to cool before refilling and passing it to be lighted.

During the smoking, the time was passed in telling stories, one guest after another offering a short tale of an experience in war or the hunt; or some bit of camp life, so funny that he kept his listeners laughing until tears came to their eyes. I soon learned that Indians love a good joke, a good laugh, even more than their white brothers do; also, that they are very courteous to one another, it being considered the height of rudeness to interrupt a speaker or attract others' attention from what he is saying. Even in heated argument, each speaker is given a courteous hearing. Let me say right here that Indians — my own people, at any rate — are just the opposite of the average white person's conception of them. Individual character in the red race is as varied as it is in the white race. There are wise Indians and foolish; the joyous and the taciturn; the truthful and the liars; the virtuous and the degenerate; the miserly and the generous; the brave and the cowardly. As a whole, back in the buffalo days, their days of plenty, the Blackfeet were a far more moral and happy people than any community of white people that I have known!

Well, four pipes were smoked by Mad Plume's guests, and then, when the fourth one was smoked, he ostentatiously knocked the ashes out upon the

bit of hewed board beside him and said: 'Kyi! It-sin-it'si! Tuh-kwo'!' (There! It is burned out! Go!) And at that we all filed out of the lodge and went our ways.

Henri explained to me what he had said, and added that, in shouting out his invitations, our host had asked us to a feast and four smokes. He also explained that when the number of smokes was not mentioned, it was a host's privilege to dismiss his guests, or the visitors in his lodge, at any time simply by knocking the ashes from a smoked-out pipe, and telling them to go. Were that also an everyday custom of white society, what a boon it would be to certain hosts and hostesses that I know!

Night had come while we sat at the feast, and we wended our way to our lodge in the darkness. All up and down the open bottom and in the timber the lodges of the great camp glowed with a yellowish light from the little fires within them. Our ears were assailed by a veritable Babel of sound; on all sides of us there was laughter, singing, and the beating of drums, children's happy talk and the crying of the new-born; shoutings for feasts; and, loudest of all, the howling of the huge, wolf-like dogs of the camp in answer to their wild kin of the plains. Everywhere in between the lodges the

most valuable horses of the camp were staked, the fast buffalo horses and war horses, as here they were not so easily run off by a raiding war party of the enemy. I was glad that my black buffalo horse was one of those picketed near our lodge.

No Runner accompanied us home, for we had arranged that from this time on he was to live with us and share my couch with me. He brought all his belongings with him, and how lovingly he looked at his gun and stroked it as he stood it against the back-rest at one end of our couch. I was not a little worried as to the manner in which we all, men and women and boys, were to retire; there was no possible privacy in this round, firelit lodge, I thought. I need not have been uneasy; when retiring time came, I learned by watching the others that the large buffalo robe covers of the couches answered every purpose of a dressing-room.

Henri advised me to begin at once sleeping Indian fashion, and following his directions, I took off all my clothing and slipped down deep under the blankets. No Runner did likewise, but lay down with his head at the other end of the wide, long couch. Thus our bodies did not anywhere come in contact; the possible restlessness of the one could not disturb the other. And, freed from all clothing,

my body was perfectly relaxed; I slept better than I ever had in my life.

It seemed but a moment after I lay down when I heard Henri calling my name, and I awoke to find that day had come. 'Now for the bath,' he told me. 'Just wrap a robe around you and come with us.'

Out we trooped, Henri, Antoine, No Runner, my father, too, and wended our way to the creek, whither all the males of the camp were going, even boys of a year or two, who were carried in their fathers' arms. We dropped our robes at the shore and splashed into the water, quickly washed, and then hurried back to the lodge and dressed, again screening ourselves with the robe couch covers. Winter and summer, and often in winter in holes cut in the ice, I thereafter bathed every morning with the men and boys of the camp. That practice not only kept our bodies clean; it hardened us so that we could hunt or travel on horseback in the coldest days of winter in perfect comfort. The women had their baths in the afternoon; in the streams in the summer time, but generally in sweat lodges in the winter.

In the afternoon of the third day out from Fort Benton we went into camp on Yellow River — the Judith's River of Lewis and Clark — the chiefs

announcing through their camp crier that we would remain there for some time. Later in the evening the crier again made the round of the lodges, shouting out an order of the chiefs: they declared the hunting law to be in force until a buffalo run could be made.

Antoine explained to my father and me that this law was for the benefit of the whole people; that now no selfish hunters would be allowed to go out to kill the few head of buffalo that they wanted, and thereby frighten the great herds and drive them far out upon the plains, where much time and horse power would be necessary in order to get the supply of fresh meat that the great camp needed. Young men had been appointed to watch the herds, and when the time came for a run we should be notified.

Several days passed before that word was given, days full of interest to me. With my friend No Runner I was made welcome in all the lodges of the great camp, and at different times we visited in most of those where dwelt youths of our own age, and many of my new friends came to visit me. I began to learn words of the language, particularly nouns, but made better progress in the sign language, that wonderful method for expressing thought that was common to all the tribes of the

buffalo plains from Old Mexico north to the Great Slave Lakes. The sign language doubtless originated in the semi-civilization that built the wonderful prehistoric cities and temples of Mexico, or perhaps even farther south in Central America, or the Andean plateau of Peru. It was undoubtedly centuries in passing in times of peace from one tribe to another to the Far North. All we know is that the plains tribes of the North were all using it when visited by the first white explorers of that region, Alexander Mackenzie, and the Sieur de la Verendrie. I have myself held long conversations in it with Apaches, Navajos, and other tribes of the Far South, whose languages are as different from one another, and from Blackfeet, as English is from Chinese. The signs so aptly illustrate the thought to be conveyed, that, when they have once been seen and explained, it is almost impossible to forget them.

For instance: When a white-tailed deer is alarmed and runs, it raises its tail straight up and keeps it waving like the inverted pendulum of a clock; the sign for this animal, therefore, is the waving of the index finger of the right hand, held straight up, the other fingers closed. On the other hand, when alarmed and running, the mule deer keeps its waggling tail close down against its body;

so the sign for it is made by pointing the index finger straight down, and then swaying it right and left with a wrist motion.

In like manner, each species of the animal world is indicated by its most noticeable peculiarity of form or motion. A few illustrations of this must suffice. Thus:

Antelope. Extend side by side the thumb and first finger of each hand, close all other fingers, and bring the hands up to and touching each side of the head just above the ears, the base of the thumbs against the head, the index fingers slightly crooked. Meaning: the prong horns of the animal.

Elk. Extend and widely separate the fingers and thumbs of both hands and raise them so that the wrists touch the head just above the ears. Meaning: the widely branching antlers of the animal.

Moose. The same, except that the fingers and thumbs are not separated. Meaning: palmated horns.

Bear. Tightly close both fists and raise them to the sides of the head, base of the thumbs touching it. Meaning: the bear's wide, rounding ears.

Wolf. Index and second finger of each hand extended, thumbs and other fingers closed, and base of thumbs at side of the head above the ears. Meaning: long, pointed ears. This is also the sign

for wisdom; alertness, or, as one would say, 'Be wise; take warning.'

Snake. Close all but the index finger of the right hand, and then move the hand from right to left across in front of the breast, with a wrist motion causing the finger to imitate the wriggling of the reptile.

Fish. Fingers and thumb of right hand side by side and extended, back of hand out, fingers pointing to the left, and then the hand moved to left with the wriggling motion of a fish. Here is represented a flat body, instead of a round one, as in the sign for snake, but both the fish and the snake have the one manner of locomotion.

Beaver. Now, what is the most marked characteristic of the beaver? Its broad, thin, paddle-shaped tail, of course. And, when alarmed, the beaver loudly slaps the water with its tail, a warning to its kind that they are in danger. The sign for the beaver, therefore, is to slap the back and the palm of the left hand alternately several times with the back and palm of the right hand.

Bird. Partly extend the arms at each side of the body and imitate the flapping of wings.

Eagle. Make the flapping wings sign, and then touch the left arm two or three times from elbow

to wrist with fingers of right hand. Meaning: barred wings.

Owl. Raise both hands, palms forward, to sides of the head; then make the flapping wings sign. Meaning: big-ears bird. The Blackfeet oral name for owl is kak'un-ok-sto-ki (all ears).

Man. The sign for man expresses his two-legged, straight body. Separate index and second finger of right hand — thumb and other fingers closed, and point to the ground; then invert the hand and point the index finger straight up.

Woman. Make the tips of the fingers of both hands meet at the top of the head, and then bring the hands down along each side of the head. Meaning: parted hair; the hair done into two braids. This suggests that the women's method of dressing their hair must have originated in a very remote period of time.

Old. An old man or old woman is expressed by making the sign for man or woman, and then closing both hands, thumbs up, as though grasping canes, and working them alternately forward and back.

Age. First make the sign for winter: the closed fists held up in front of the shoulders and made to tremble. Then designate the number of the winters. Tens by opening and closing the fingers of

both hands once for each ten, and raised fingers to make any number under ten.

The verb signs are fully as expressive as are those for animate and inanimate objects. Thus:

Love. Bring both closed hands up against the breast, at the same time slightly bending forward.

Hate. Close the right hand tightly, then thrust it quickly forward, at the same time snapping open the fingers.

But I have given you enough of the signs to show how aptly they express thought. I must on with my story.

Shortly after sunrise, one morning, the chiefs' crier rode hurriedly through the camp, loudly shouting that four great herds of buffalo were grazing near by, and that the run was to take place at once. He told off, too, the names of the clans that were to make up each one of the four parties of hunters, and so we of the Lone Eaters learned that we were to make the run with the hunters of the Small Robes, Back-Fat Roasters, and Black Doorways, and that Big Lake himself was to lead us.

Ha! What a rush there was for horses, following the camp crier's announcement!

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT BUFFALO RUN

All the fast buffalo horses were close tethered in the camp, and at daybreak, as usual, the young herders had all run their bands from the plains down into the valley. So now, while the hunters hurried to mount their favorite animals, the women caught up gentle riding- and pack- and travois-horses, in order to trail along behind, and help in the butchering and bringing-in of the meat and hides.

I have recently seen a copy of a painting by a noted artist, which depicts an Indian running buffalo, in full war costume of painted and fur- and scalp-fringed buckskin, and trailing war-bonnet of eagle tail-feathers. Alas, for the truth! Why should we not have truth in art as well as in the printed word? Never did an Indian so dress himself for a buffalo run; his beautiful war clothes were never put on except for great ceremonials: war dances, religious dances, the making of a peace treaty, and, if there was time, when about to fight with the enemy.

As I looked about me while preparing for this,

my first buffalo run, I noticed at once that, while some of the hunters had on a shirt and leggings, many of them wore only a breech-clout and moccasins, and that none carried a leather or fur robe. Moreover, all of them rode bareback, and for a bridle used a rawhide or hair-braided rope half-hitched around their horse's under jaw. Henri warned my father and me not to use our saddles, for if we did, and if our animals fell with us, we were likely to be seriously injured by the saddle-horn.

We both protested that we were not experienced enough to ride bareback, and he answered: 'Then don't take part in the run! You can have plenty of fun by watching it.'

For the first time I mounted my black buffalo horse, No Runner's gift to me. I found at once that he was very high-spirited, yet gentle enough. He answered the bit perfectly, prancing beautifully when I reined him up. With Henri and Antoine and No Runner I rode over to the throng of hunters gathering in front of Big Lake's lodge, and he soon came out, mounted a powerful gray horse, and, with one of the young buffalo scouts by his side, led us off down the valley. The three other parties, led by the watchers of the herds, started at the same time for the ones that they were to run. We

were no more than clear of the camp when my almost-sister, Kak-at-os'ah-ki, came tearing up to us on a big sorrel horse. No Runner began scolding her at once, but she only laughed at him, keeping her snorting, fiery-eyed, impatient animal well under control. Antoine told me what they were saying to each other.

'Why are you here?' No Runner demanded. 'Your place is back with the women!'

'I shall be with them when the time comes to begin work on what you kill. Never fear but I shall do my share!' she answered.

'You have no right to be wasting the strength of our father's sorrel buffalo horse,' No Runner told her.

'Father told me that I could ride him and come with you. Brother, don't you want your sister ever to have any fun? Just think how much work I do for you: making your moccasins; mending them; cooking for you! You should be glad that I have this chance to ride a fast horse and follow you in the run.'

'And so I am! Forget that I objected to it! I take shame to myself for saying what I did to you!' No Runner answered, and both smiled happily.

Our party numbered something like two hundred men. I noticed at once that they all were armed

with bows and arrows, instead of the guns that I knew they possessed, and presently asked Henri the reason for it.

'For a very good reason,' he answered. 'Three or four arrows can be discharged in the time required to reload a gun and recap it, and at close range an arrow is just as effective as a ball. And then, powder and balls cost these people so much that they are very saving of them; they are very careful to have a good supply ready for a battle with the enemy.'

'Who is the enemy?' my father asked.

'Who *are* the enemy?' Antoine laughed. 'Crows, Sioux, Assiniboines, Crees, and some of the other-side-of-the-mountains tribes. We are likely to meet a war party of one or another of them at any time!'

Our friend's statement set me to thinking. I wondered how I should act if we should meet a war party? A shivery feeling crept up my back. I put the thought from me!

We rode at a gentle trot down the valley for something like three miles, through fine groves of cottonwoods and across open bottoms covered with rich grasses, and patches of rosebrush and sage, and then approached the mouth of a deep, wide coulee putting into the valley from the north.

As we neared it, another buffalo scout came down from the edge of the plain to meet us, and held a short conference with our leaders, Big Lake, Mad Plume, and others.

We in the rear did not learn what was said, but we were all soon riding up the soft bed of the winding coulee, now at a walk instead of a trot. After going a half-mile or more, frequently stopping while the scout would climb to the lookout upon the plain, we learned that we were getting quite near the herd. As we went on, we, of course, mounted near and nearer to the level of it, and at our last stop could almost see it. This time, when the scout returned, word was passed down the line that we were close to the edge of the herd, and that we were to prepare to charge it. We turned our horses to face the sloping east bank of the coulee, every hunter drawing his bow and a handful of arrows from the case-and-quiver at his back, and then, as Big Lake waved his bow high in the air, we were off.

When we topped that little rise, I saw spread out before me what I thought was the grandest sight that I had ever seen, a herd of all of two thousand buffalo scattered about upon the rolling plain, some lying down, some grazing, others apparently taking a standing sleep; many of the

animals so near that I could see their eyes deep-set and gleaming in their shaggy head hair. We were right in among them before they recovered from their surprise and began with wonderful quickness to run to the east, gathering into a compact mass as they did so. Their rattling hoofs made a roaring as of heavy thunder, and raised a cloud of feathery, whitish dust that trailed behind them. The air was strong with the pungent odor of the sagebrush and greasewood that they crushed.

Antoine and Henri had warned my father and me to keep out of the run; to do no more than watch from a distance the hunters making their kills. Had I been minded to do so, I could not have obeyed their instructions: the instant my well-trained horse sighted the buffalo, I could no more have checked him than I could have stopped one of the big bulls in front of me by grasping him by the tail. A 'buffalo horse' enjoyed the chase fully as much as the hunter who rode him. He depended upon the rider to guide him toward the certain one of the fleeing animals that he wanted, and then strained every muscle to range up alongside it.

As I rode into the thick of the chase, I saw our scattered party of men straining forward on their runners, their braided hair streaming and flapping in the wind, their eyes blazing with excitement,

their tense faces expressing grim satisfaction as they fired arrow after arrow into the vitals of fat cows. The shafts were aimed to strike in just back of the ribs, and range forward into the heart and lungs. Another quickly fatal shot was through the kidneys. In this last shot the arrow frequently pierced the buffalo's spinal column and the animal instantly went down — sometimes with such force that it turned a complete somersault after striking the ground.

No Runner, just ahead of me, was the rider whom I chose to follow; he opened a clear path for me in the dense mass of the herd, the animals crowding off to the right and left of us as we pressed on, and closing in behind us in their attempt to avoid those of our party who were upon slower horses. And therein lay the great risk to the buffalo-runner: if his horse stumbled and carried him down, he was almost certain to be trampled to death by the surging, closely crowded mass of the herd coming on behind him. Not only he, but his horse as well, if it did not immediately regain its feet and run on. Even then it was more than likely to be gored to death by the sharp horns of the buffalo, for they had no fear of a riderless horse.

Watching my friend shoot his arrows into several cows, I was so interested in his skill that I forgot

what I was there for, until my horse actually thrust out his head and made a vicious bite at the hump of a young cow alongside which he had brought me. At that I poked my rifle out, half-aiming at its ribs, and fired, and saw blood almost instantly gush from its nostrils and mouth in a heavy, bubble-flecked stream; that being, as I afterward learned, always the result of a shot in the lungs.

Ha! That first — and successful — shot of mine at a buffalo aroused a blood thirst in me as I saw the animal soon begin to stagger, and then go down. 'I have killed a buffalo! Killed a buffalo!' I shouted; and could scarcely hear my own voice in that thunder of something like eight thousand feet upon the hard, dry plain! I let my bridle reins go slack as I started to reload my rifle, and of his own accord my horse brought me close over to the side of another cow. Three times I poured a charge of powder from my horn into my hand, and each time lost it while attempting to convey it into the muzzle of the weapon. I managed to get the most of the fourth charge down into the barrel, and then — foolish one that I was — took a ball and a patch from a pocket of my coat, then my short, flat-knobbed starter of hardwood, and started the ball down. I had then to draw the ramrod with which

to force the ball down to the powder. Now, what I should have done — what all hunters did in running buffalo — was simply to drop an unpatched ball in to follow the powder, give the stock a tap or two to make sure that the ball rolled down to place, and keep the muzzle well up while putting a cap on the lock, and until ready to fire again; then, by taking quick aim and pulling the trigger, the charge would be fired before the ball would have time to start to roll out of the barrel.

Well, I got the ramrod out and was about to insert it in the barrel, when I suddenly felt a heavy pressure against my left leg, and saw that my horse and I were going up in the air. I looked down and lo! the big cow that we were too closely crowding had gone mad with fear and anger, had got her powerful head under the horse just back of his forelegs, and was heaving us out of her way! The horse made a desperate lunge to free himself by going on over her head, and would have succeeded had not one of her horns caught under the saddle cincha. That halted him with such a sudden jerk that I tumbled from him to the ground, and as he fell, the cincha broke and the saddle came flying off and struck the side of my head, almost stunning me!

I had fallen flat upon my stomach. Almost

breathless and very dizzy, I still had strength enough to get to my feet and take up my rifle. I saw my horse spring up and run on, trailing his bridle, and almost instantly the buffalo crowding in behind him hid him from me. I could have poked out my gun and touched the stream of the animals that were passing on either side of me! 'I am gone! I shall be trampled to death!' I said to myself.

Just then I thought I heard a shout. I turned about, and through the thick, swirling dust that filled the air saw my almost-sister bearing down upon me, and trying with all her strength to check her horse. I made one spring and caught hold of his rope bridle, and he actually lifted me from the ground and nearly got free. Had the rope not been half-hitched around his lower jaw, he would have gone free; but that gave me a powerful leverage, one that was very painful to him. He came whirling around, prancing and snorting and quivering, the girl took my rifle from me, and I managed to get up behind her at the first attempt, and to keep my seat by encircling her waist with my left arm, meantime reaching out and taking back my rifle.

On we went. I looked back and saw behind us a solid mass of buffalo, and here and there a rider shooting arrows into them. We moved, as it were,

MY HORSE AND I WERE GOING UP IN THE AIR

in a moving little oasis in that sea of dusty, shaggy, sharp-horned heads and heaving humps. We went ever slower and slower, and the buffalo behind kept crowding to right and left to avoid us as they went on at swifter pace. It seemed to me hours that we were in that crush, but in fact it could not have been more than five minutes after I got up behind the girl when the tail of the herd passed us and we were free. Our horse now willingly came to a stand. I slid off him and wabbled to a near buffalo carcass and sat down on it. Star Woman got down and sat beside me.

Blood was running down my cheek from the wound that the saddle had made in the side of my head; she plucked some tufts of the short prairie grass and wiped it away, and then sprinkled fine dust upon the cut. In a moment or two I felt better. I stood up and looked at the fleeing herd, some of the hunters — those who had the most enduring horses — still pursuing it. I turned and looked back: all along the course that we had come, the plain was dotted with dead and wounded buffalo, several hundred of them. The wounded — those too badly and too painfully wounded to go far — had gathered and were gathering into little groups, seeking sympathy from one another in the strange calamity that had come upon them. The hunters

who had dropped out from the chase were riding from one to another of the groups and putting them out of their misery with sure-sped arrows. To the very last the big bulls — and even the cows — would hump up and try to charge the riders, or at least keep head toward them. And then, after the finishing arrow was shot into them, they would stand rigid while the life blood streamed out, then begin to sway, and finally topple over with a crash, dead as they struck the ground. A dying buffalo, especially a huge old bull, was a truly majestic sight.

Out from the groups of returning riders my father and Henri and Antoine now came to us, and then No Runner, leading my horse, still bleeding from the bad cut in the breast it had got from the cow. While my almost-sister and I explained in our own languages what had happened to me, my father became greatly excited, and when our tale was ended, he began to scold me, and declared that he would not allow me to run buffalo again.

'Now! Now! Be reasonable,' Henri told him. 'What happened was through my fault. I should have told the boy how to reload his rifle, and that he should never let a horse crowd a buffalo too close.'

'It is dangerous work at the best, this running of

buffalo. I don't intend that my son shall do any more of it,' said my father. 'I myself shall never make another run!'

'Ha-ha!' Antoine laughed. 'That is just what I said after I made my first run. But you will do just as I did, just as we all do. We say to ourselves that we will not join in the chase; that we will only go out with the hunters and watch them make the run. But, once out there, when the charge is begun, we simply cannot resist following close to see it all, and then the first thing we know we are right in it, choosing the fat cows and shooting them down just as long as our horses can keep the pace!'

'Perhaps you are right,' said my father, after a moment of thought. 'I have to confess that I went mad with the excitement of the run! I never thought of the danger once I got going. And I killed three buffalo! Not bad for a beginner, was it?'

'I killed one!' I cried, 'and I am going to skin it just as soon as I can find my saddle and my ramrod!'

I didn't have to look for the saddle; one of the hunters brought it to us just then, and Henri repaired the cincha for me. I put the saddle upon Star Woman's horse, and we rode double in search for the ramrod and soon found it. We then rode

back to my kill and butchered it. I was a very happy youth when I stuck my knife into that first buffalo of my killing!

The women of the hunters were now scattered out along the course of the run, and how they did chatter and laugh and sing as they helped in the butchering! I was surprised to see how quickly they could skin a big cow and cut its meat into convenient portions to load upon their travois- and pack-horses. Within three hours after the run, we were all strung out upon our homeward way, arriving in camp early in the afternoon. The other parties that had gone out had also made successful runs.

As soon as they had got the meat to their lodges, the women began cutting it into thin sheets for drying, hanging it upon lines and up-tilted travois, and upon the bushes roundabout, until, as I saw it from a distance, the great camp was one long, red blur in the light of the setting sun. And how happy the people were! Until far into the night, as long as I remained awake and I know not how much longer, men kept shouting feast invitations and invitations to dancing and to gambling parties. A hundred drums were beating time to the dancing and to the singing, and, not to be outdone, the several thousand dogs of the camp had a singing

party of their own, in which they were joined by the wolves and coyotes that always came circling about the lodges with the falling of night.

After the great buffalo run the chiefs suspended the hunting law, and day after day we roamed where we willed to go, trapping beavers and otters along the streams, shooting deer and elk in the foothills of the mountains, and bighorn on the bare, rocky heights, and occasionally going out upon the plain for antelope and buffalo. It was every hunter's aim to keep his lodge well supplied with fresh meat, so that the great store of dried meat resulting from the big run could be reserved for use during the worst of the coming winter weather.

We remained on Yellow River for a month or more, and then moved on and trapped and hunted, in turn, It-Crushed-Them Creek (Armell's Creek now), the lower Musselshell, its tributaries, Flat-willow and Box Elder Creeks, and late in the fall arrived back in Fort Benton on our way to Sun River, where the chiefs had decided we should winter.

During these summer months I had become a good rider and hunter, and, under the careful instructions of Henri and Antoine, a successful beaver and otter trapper. Also, I had learned so much of the Blackfeet language that my progress in it was

now very rapid. No Runner and I were inseparable companions, and my almost-sister, Star Woman, rode with us on our hunting and trapping excursions with her father's hearty approval. He often said that he wished she had been born a boy, for she had within her the right spirit for the making of a great warrior. And then he began to tell many evening tales of Pi'ta-mak-an (Running Eagle), a virgin woman warrior of the Blackfeet who had become a leader of war parties and made a great name for herself.

'In her lodge in camp, dressed in her neat buckskin gown, she was the gentlest and kindest of women, loved and honored by all!' he would say. 'On the war trail, dressed like any warrior, she was a stern, silent leader, and, until her last battle, when she was killed while raiding a camp of the enemy, she invariably led her parties to great success. Whenever she gave out word that she was going to war, even the greatest of our warriors would go to her and ask to be allowed to join her party. Why? Because she had powerful medicine! Because her visions always showed her the way to victory!'

And then Mad Plume, after recounting a tale of her war trails, would say: 'Daughter, you yourself can be just such a war leader if you will. Deny

yourself but one thing and the way to it is open to you. That one thing is love. A man can have both love and war, but a woman can have only one of the two!'

How well I remember the night that Star Woman made her choice! It was the night before our return to Fort Benton. We were encamped on the Shonkin. There was snow on the ground, and a fierce northwest wind made the lodge ears flap so fast that they droned like a huge swarm of bees — like a score of swarms. Within, how comfortable we were upon the soft couches, securely sheltered from the wind and warmed by the bright little lodge fire! Besides No Runner and myself there were several men visitors, including a great medicine man, named Old Sun (Nat-os' Ap-i: Sun Old), and a number of women, the latter all gathered near the doorway with the women of the lodge. Mad Plume told another tale of Running Eagle, the virgin warrior, and all listened to it as interestedly as though they had never heard it before, for the speaker's oratory, his vivid words and gestures were more than enough to make any tale of interest.

And, as usual, after he brought the tale to its end, he said to Star Woman: 'Daughter, well you know what my great desire is: you have but to make your choice, to choose the warrior trail, and

you can become as great as ever Running Eagle was!'

'Ai! That you can certainly do, if you will but make up your mind to do it,' cried Old Sun. 'Daughter of my lifelong friend,' the old man continued, raising his hands in supplication to her, his voice quivering with emotion, 'make your choice now! Here, before us all, make your vow to Sun that you will become his own, his sacred property. That you will never marry! That you will become, even as that virgin Running Eagle was, a terror to our enemies, and a kind and generous friend to the widows and orphans and the old and feeble of our tribe!'

The women at the doorway gasped as he ceased speaking. It was a tremendous vow that the old medicine man asked the girl to make. Men and women both, we all stared at her and held our breath, waiting to hear her answer. She did not give it at once.

She stooped over in her seat, rubbing her hands nervously together, and finally said: 'My father! and you, Old Sun, great medicine man! Well you know that this great sun-vow you ask me to make is something that, once made, cannot be broken. Would that I could make it now! But think how young I am! I ask you to give me time. Time to

know myself; to feel sure that I am worthy to make the vow. I want to make it! I want to be a sun woman! I promise that I will make it just as soon as I learn that I can keep it!'

'Ha! Well said!' Old Sun told her. 'Your reply shows more sense than could be expected from one of your youth. It shows that you have within you the true, wise, and honest spirit that is the making of a sun woman. Pray for good, for revealing dreams. Your father, and I, too, will sacrifice to Sun, to all the gods, and pray them to aid you in every way. I predict that you will soon be able to make the vow!'

'We will smoke one more pipe!' said Mad Plume, his voice all trembling with emotion. 'Let us smoke it to Sun with suitable prayer!'

He filled the great pipe, and Old Sun lighted it, and with the first few whiffs from it begged Sun to have pity upon Star Woman; to show her the way to become, even as Running Eagle had been, the pride and joy of the tribe of the Pi-ku'ni, and all the Blackfeet tribes. And then as the pipe went from hand to hand, all who received and smoked it prayed that Star Woman could soon make the desired vow. The pipe was soon smoked. Mad Plume knocked out the ashes and said 'Kyi!' to us. We went our several ways.

That night before the fires died out it was known in every lodge that Star Woman was to undertake to vow herself to Sun. Many a young warrior sighed when he heard the news. Of late the best and bravest of them had been frequent visitors in Mad Plume's lodge. They would visit it no more to display their graces of mind and person and their fine clothing before the young girl's eyes!

As I made my way home with No Runner, I felt much depressed by what had happened in Mad Plume's lodge. Not that I felt myself in love with Star Woman. I felt much as I had when, shortly before we left St. Louis, a girl friend had entered a convent.

In Blackfeet and in French we gave out the news as soon as we were back upon our couch in the lodge. Upon hearing it, Henri and Antoine shrugged their shoulders, and Antoine merely said, 'Well, if our little sister wants to become a sun virgin, that is her business, not ours.'

Said my father: 'In one thing Christians and heathen are alike: They put themselves to no end of torture of mind and body in fulfillment of their superstitions!'

'Poor little sister! I am sorry for her! She is to miss woman's greatest joy, the happiness of being a good man's wife!' said Eagle Woman.

Grouse Woman said nothing. She was so overcome by the news that she went to bed crying, and I heard her sighing and whimpering long after the fire had begun to die out.

CHAPTER IV

THE UNDER-WATER PEOPLE

Upon arriving in Fort Benton, we stored our furs with the proprietor of the Overland Hotel, and then remained idly in camp for a week or more, while the Indians traded what furs they had for various supplies.

Henri and Antoine and my father, free trappers and traders, were not welcome in the Fort. Since its organization, in 1822, the American Fur Company had practically monopolized the trading and trapping in the Upper Missouri country, and bitterly resented any competition in it. I myself visited the Fort but once during our stay. I had to go once, just to satisfy my curiosity.

Its massive adobe walls were overlooked by two bastions of two stories, each bastion having two cannon. The great gate was as strong as the walls, and within this gate was another, a small one, through which, in times of suspected trouble, a few Indians at a time were admitted to trade, and then only on the condition that they leave their weapons at home.

The Pi-ku'ni, I learned, had ever been upon the

most friendly terms with the Company, the different factors and the employees having almost without exception married into the tribe. The other tribes of the Blackfeet, however, the Blackfeet proper and the Bloods and the Gros Ventres, had not been so friendly, and once, incited thereto by the Hudson's Bay Company, had plotted to destroy the Fort and kill its occupants. The Crows, too, coming at a time when they knew that their powerful enemy, the Pi-ku'ni, were away in the North, laid siege to the place, vowing that they would starve out the white men who were furnishing guns to their enemies. On the fourth day of the siege, the factor of the Company, Major Culbertson, ordered the cannon to be trained upon the camp and fired.

When the big guns boomed and the heavy balls came hurtling and bounding in among the lodges, luckily doing no harm to the people, the result was all that could have been hoped for: the Crows broke camp and pulled out for the South in such desperate fright and haste that they left considerable of their property on the ground!

The Blackfeet plot, however, came near being successful. It was planned for the warriors to enter the Fort, a few at a time, with weapons concealed under their robes, and then at a given

signal to attack the whites. It happened that at the time a young warrior of the Bloods was in love with one of the women of the Fort. Fearing that she might be injured in the intended massacre of the whites, he one night called her to the gate, told her what was to happen, and begged her to come out and run off with him. He had, it seems, mistaken the woman's regard for him: she loved her white man and immediately ran to him and told what she had learned. The next morning the factor invited the chiefs of the North tribes into the Fort, told them that he had learned all about their plan to kill him and his men and destroy the place, and that thereafter every Indian who wished to come in to trade or visit would be searched for weapons at the gate, and that the cannon in the bastions would be kept constantly primed and trained upon visiting parties. The chiefs were intensely chagrined at the discovery of their plot. They laid all the blame upon the factor of the Hudson's Bay Company and asked for forgiveness. That was granted, after some talk, and the result was that from that time the American Fort got each season the most of the trade of the North tribes.

Real winter came soon after we made camp on Sun River, or, as the Blackfeet tribes named it,

Kok-sis'stuk-wi-e-tuk-tai (Point-of-Rocks River). Our lodges were pitched in the shelter of an immense cottonwood grove just below the place in the valley where Fort Shaw was afterward located. There we had fuel enough for a long time to come; on all sides of the camp and out upon the plain there was fine grazing for the horses; game of all kinds was very plentiful; and the river-banks were lined with beaver dens. Our chiefs had brought us to an ideal place to winter.

As soon as the beavers were trapped out within reasonable riding distance of camp, Henri and Antoine and their women, and my father, No Runner, and I moved our lodge and our belongings up the valley to the foot of the mountains. Farther than that we could not go with horses because of the great depth of snow. But after a time Henri and Antoine went on snowshoes a day's travel farther up the stream and there established a trapping camp, and the amount of fur that we took from that place and from our main camp during the next three months was something surprising.

When March came, and we ceased trapping and moved down to the camp of the Pi-ku'ni, we had no less than four hundred beaver hides, forty-four otter hides, and about two hundred pelts of fisher, marten, and mink. This catch, with what

we had stored at Fort Benton, made up an amount which my father roughly estimated to be worth seven thousand dollars.

We had not enough horses upon which to pack all of our winter's catch, but Mad Plume lent us some of his animals, and so enabled us to take the whole outfit to Fort Benton in one trip. With the Pi-ku'ni, we arrived there on the 15th of March.

It was a very early spring. The ice had gone out of the river on the 5th of March, and several free trappers had already set out for St. Louis with their catches of fur. We arrived at the Fort just in time for my father to engage transportation for himself and our catch on a large keel boat which two enterprising mechanics had been building during the winter. Several other trappers were also going in it with their furs, and when these had all been put aboard, they made a pile of valuable pelts that must have just about made the American Fur Company's factor sick! For two days before the boat left, he was constantly present at the loading, depicting in French and in English the dangers of the treacherous river, the hostile tribes of Indians along it, and then offering to buy the furs — at a ridiculously low price, of course.

My father and the others just laughed at him, and on the 20th of the month they pushed the big

boat out into the stream and started on their twenty-two-hundred-mile journey. Henri and Antoine and I watched them as long as they were in sight, and then returned to camp.

Now during the winter, largely through the aid of Mad Plume, the Pi-ku'ni had agreed to trade with the American Fur Company no more than was absolutely necessary, and to come to Fort Benton in the moon of falling leaves (September) and trade with my father for the goods that he would have there by that time. It was understood that he would not have enough to supply all their needs for the winter, but they were to take what he had and then buy what else they wanted from the big Company. They now flocked to the Fort and laid in a good supply of powder and ball and tobacco, and other necessaries and luxuries, such as red paint, hand mirrors, beads, and red and blue trade cloth, and within a week we were off for the long summer hunt.

There! I have, as a sailor would say, cleared the deck for action! I have explained how I, a mere youth, came to be to all intents and purposes one of the Pi-ku'ni, speaking their language, living their life, traveling with them wherever they wandered in their vast hunting ground. And so, at last, I come to that which I promised you, the

tale of that part of my adventures which I love best to dwell upon!

After leaving Fort Benton, we camped for a time upon the Marias River of Lewis and Clark; for a time upon Little or Milk River, just north of the Sweet Grass Hills. Then, following up its valley to the foot of the Rockies, and crossing a high ridge, the divide between the waters of the Arctic and the Gulf of Mexico, we made a long descent and went into camp at the foot of the lower one of two beautiful lakes which the Pi-ku'ni called Puh'to-muk-si-kim-iks (Inside-Large-Lakes). I had not then learned that, years before, Hugh Monroe — or Rising Wolf (Mah-kwi'i-po-ahts), as the Pi-ku'ni lovingly called him — had given them an English name, Saint Mary's Lakes.[1] The Pi-ku'ni had rightly named them: they are 'inside lakes,' the upper one especially, as it is hemmed in by great mountains, in most places rising to immense heights from its very shores!

Our great camp was located on the west side of the river, the outlet of the lakes, in a wide, well-grassed flat which ran from the sandy shore on down the valley for several miles. As we moved out upon the flat to pitch camp a large herd of buffalo grazing there took fright at our approach

[1] The largest lakes in what is now Glacier National Park.

and dashed off down the valley, and a band of elk that had been resting in a narrow grove of timber near the shore ran out past us and made a break for the near mountain-side. The most of these were chased and killed by our hunters before they could reach the shelter of the thickly growing hillside timber. Henri told me that the mountain and valley forests were swarming with elk, deer, and moose, and that there were bands of bighorn and white goats everywhere along the rocky heights. There were also many grizzly bears and black bears, and beavers and otters were extremely plentiful along all the streams. I looked forward to some great sport with my rifle, and to rich reward for my trapping.

We went into camp on the flat at noontime. On that evening, near sundown, Star Woman came hurrying into our lodge and said to me: 'Oh, almost-brother! Come! Come quickly! I have found something that will please you!'

'What is it? What have you found?' we all asked, but she would not tell us what it was.

'It is something of value. Something that I know will please my almost-brother. Come and see it,' she answered.

Out she went and we followed, Henri and Antoine and their women, and No Runner and I.

She led us to the grove of cottonwoods bordering the point where the river left the lake, and there, in a thick growth of alders underneath the trees, showed us an old log canoe. Old it was, the wood all cracked and checked with time, yet it appeared to be — with considerable gumming — still in serviceable condition. It had been laid bottom up across two logs, both now pretty well rotted down to the ground. We turned it over and found underneath two warped and rotting paddles and a broken, chainless beaver trap. Henri examined the latter and declared it to be of the make used by the trappers of the Hudson's Bay Company.

'Well, whoever made this canoe and left it here intended to return and use it again, else it would not have been put away in the brush and rested upon these log pieces, which you see were cut for the purpose,' said Antoine.

'It will be a fine plaything for you,' Henri told me. 'You can go fishing and hunting in it.'

I looked out upon the placid lake, all of seven miles long, and decided that I would do as he said. It would be fun to explore the bays of the lake with the canoe, and land upon its island, and of course while doing this there would be numberless opportunities for killing game for our lodge. I asked No Runner and Star Woman if they would

help me gather gum for pitching the canoe, and they answered that they would be glad to do so.

Early the next morning Henri and Antoine rode away down the river to set their beaver traps, and a little later, their women accompanying us, No Runner, his sister, and I went up into the timber north of the lake after the gum. The mountain-side was thickly grown with pine and spruce, fir and balsam, and groves of quaking aspen. In the latter the new grass and the plant that we called bear weed grew high and rank, and was everywhere criss-crossed by well-beaten trails of deer, elk, moose, and bear. The bear trails were especially numerous. The animals seemed to be living almost entirely upon the plant I have mentioned, for we came to place after place where they had cleared large patches of it, eating the brittle, hollow, sweetish stalks and leaving the large-leaved tops to wither and die.

At most of these places we could actually detect the rank, offensive odor of the animals, so recently had they been feeding there, and then, coming to a small swamp, we found the trail of one that was so fresh that the mud it had stirred up in passing had not settled. When the women saw that, they begged to be taken back to camp at once: that is, Grouse Woman and Eagle Woman did. My

almost-sister said not a word. I could see by the expression of her eyes that she was frightened, but she would not acknowledge it; she was doing her very best to acquire that steadfastness of mind and body in the face of danger which she must have in order to become a warrior woman.

To tell the truth, I myself had not the least desire to follow the trail of that bear. The tracks it had left in the mud were more than a foot in length and proportionately broad, and by that I judged the animal to be about the size of a buffalo cow. I was glad enough when No Runner abruptly led us off the trail, and said that we would gather the gum in the timber bordering the lake.

Later on, when we two happened to be at a little distance from the women, he said to me: 'Almost-brother, the bear that made those big footprints in the swamp mud must have been no other than old Head-Crusher!'

'Head-Crusher! I don't understand,' I told him.

'He is the biggest bear in this mountain country,' he explained, 'and has lived here a long time. Those who have seen him say that his hair is almost white; that his body is as big around as that of a full-grown buffalo bull. Almost-brother, he is a killer of people! That is his sport! He lies in wait beside the trails, and when a man or woman

passes, he springs out and with one blow of his great paw crushes in the top of the poor one's head! Death is as quick as by a stroke of lightning! And when he has made his kill, he covers the body with grass, leaves, brush, anything that he can gather, and then goes his way. He has always attacked persons alone; he has never been seen to make a kill; but that is not proof that he would not have attacked us had we kept going on his trail.'

'How many people has he killed?' I asked.

'Four crushed-head bodies of women have been found, and five of men. No doubt it was he who killed several more hunters who never returned to camp,' he answered.

'Well, since he is so bad, why haven't your people made a big hunt for him and killed him?' I wanted to know.

'That has been tried, not once but four different times, and each time Head-Crusher has escaped, apparently without being hit by even one of the many bullets and arrows fired at him. That proves that he has powerful medicine, that he cannot be killed. Our warriors hunt him no more. In this country none of us ever goes out alone to hunt, no woman goes by herself to the timber to gather wood. It is now a long time since he has made a kill. That seems to prove that he attacks only

lone persons. All the same, I was glad enough to turn off his trail there at the edge of the swamp!'

'It is well that we did,' I agreed. 'There is no telling what such an animal may do.'

No Runner and I did not gather much gum; we kept watch for the bear while the women went from tree to tree, taking what they could find, and that was considerable; by noon we had all of fifteen pounds of the stuff, and hurried home with it. Later on, when Antoine and Henri returned from their trap-setting, they mixed the gum with the right proportion of buffalo tallow and melted it together in a kettle, and then we smeared the whole outside of the canoe with it. We had previously dragged the canoe to the shore of the lake. We now slid it into the water, and I took up a new paddle that I had made, and called to No Runner and Star Woman to get in and ride out upon the lake with me.

'Not I!' No Runner answered. 'I am afraid of the Under-Water People!'

'And so am I!' said my almost-sister.

'Go ahead! You will never get them out upon that deep water,' Henri told me, and, not understanding what it was they feared, I paddled off and went up close along the heavily timbered west shore of the lake for several miles.

I had a fine time all by myself. The canoe, about sixteen feet in length, proved to be easy to paddle, once I got it going, and easy to steer. On my way up I discovered several places where beavers were cutting quaking aspens and sinking the wood in front of their dens in the bank. Then, upon rounding a sharp point, I found myself within close range of a big bull moose that had come out to the shore to drink. His fuzz-coated antlers were not half grown, and altogether I thought him the most uncouth animal that I had ever seen. He stared at me for a moment and then turned and trotted off into the brush. I could not have harmed him, for I had left my rifle in camp.

On my way back I made a strange find. Noticing a commotion on the surface of the still water I paddled to it and found a very large fish feebly circling around and around, apparently unable to dive. I gave it a blow on the head with my paddle, then seized it by the gills and drew it aboard, and found that it was being choked to death by a silvery scaled fish that it could neither swallow nor eject from its throat. When I got them to camp I learned that the larger one, of about fifteen pounds weight, was a lake trout, and the smaller one, of about three pounds, was a whitefish.

No Runner and Star Woman were on the shore,

awaiting me, and as soon as I landed they cried out: 'Did you see them?' 'Did they attempt to seize you?'

'I didn't see any one. Who would seize me?' I asked.

'The Under-Water People,' No Runner answered.

'The lake is full of them!' Star Woman cried.

I was on the point of laughing at them, telling them that there were no such persons, when a better thought came to me, and I said: 'The people of my blood, white people, have never seen the kind of people you mention. It must be that they fear us. If you will go out on the lake with me to-morrow I promise you that you will not see one of them.'

'We would like to go with you; were it not for the dread ones we would go with you. It must be fun to ride silently close to the shore and watch for the game along it,' said No Runner.

'If I am ever to become a warrior woman I must brave all things. I shall ask my father and Old Sun to make sacrifice to the Under-Water People, and then go with you to-morrow, almost-brother,' said Star Woman.

'I, too. Yes, we will go with you to-morrow!' No Runner agreed.

At that I lifted the big trout from the canoe, and they clapped hand to mouth in surprise, and said that they had never seen so large a fish and so greedy a one.

'Come!' I said. 'We will take it home and have some of it cooked for our evening meal.'

They made no answer to that, but I saw them look at one another in a startled, strange way as we left the shore. Henri and Antoine were more than pleased when I brought the fish into the lodge. They said that a good meal of trout was just what they had been wanting, but now we would have better than that, the whitefish that was stuck in the big trout's throat.

I laid the fish down in front of Grouse Woman and said, 'Very fish-hungry am I, too. Do cook a lot of it!'

She drew back from it with hands raised in horror, and so did Eagle Woman.

'What? Do you think that I am crazy — that I will even touch the Under-Water People's food?' she asked.

'This is the time when we cook our own meal,' said Henri, and took up the fish and went outside to clean it.

I turned to Antoine. 'Now, what is all this about?' I asked him.

'Just this,' he answered: 'The Pi-ku'ni — all the Blackfeet tribes — believe that the rivers and lakes are inhabited by a vicious race of people that they call the Under-Water People. They live in lodges away down in the deep waters, and eat fish, which are their own food animals, just as the game animals of the plains are our food. Therefore if any of us take and eat their food they will seize us and drag us down to our death at the first opportunity. They are believed to take particular delight in seizing and drowning the people of the earth.

'My son,' he went on, 'let me advise you now never to laugh at these superstitions of our red friends, never to let them know that you have no belief in them. By arguing that they are not true, these beliefs of theirs, you will but make enemies of those who would be your true friends. Think now how reasonable is this particular belief to the savage mind. Ages ago swimmers were seen, strong men and powerful, suddenly to raise their hands and cry out for help, and then go down in the deep water to rise no more. It was not conceivable that they were attacked by a setting of the muscles, by a cramping of them. It was conceivable — and every action and expression of the victims showed it — that some terrible inhabitant

of the water had seized them and dragged them down to their death. Thinking constantly about this, the horror of it ever in their minds, it was not long before some man solved the problem. In his dream, his vision as he called it, his shadow went forth from his body on discovery. He, his shadow, looking down into deep water, saw some lodges set up at the bottom of it. He dived down, entered one of them, and was welcomed by a white-haired old man and his old wife. They told who they were, Under-Water People, and they gave him a little feast — strawberries, of all things! Well, the man awoke, called his people together and told them his dream, his vision. Not for a moment did he nor any of his hearers doubt that his dream was an actual experience of his shadow. All was explained; it was Under-Water People who had seized and drowned the poor swimmers of the river! People who had the power, the medicine, to live in the water were more than people, they were gods. Dread gods at that, gods who must be propitiated with prayers and sacrifices.'

'I have thought much about dreams,' said Henri, as he came in with the cleaned fish. 'What one thinks much about, that will he dream about, but not in a connected, clear way. The sleeper loses control of his brain; its machinery goes wrong;

but the more wrong it is, the more impossible the resulting dream, the more the poor Indians — yes, and some white people, too — believe that they have been particularly favored by their gods. Dreams, my friends, are the root, the foundation of many religions!'

'Hurry, my man, and cook your unclean food. We want space at the fire to cook some real food,' Henri's woman told him.

'Hand me a bladder of marrow grease, then,' he told her.

Marrow grease, the tried-out marrow of buffalo leg-bones, sweet, soft, odorless, was the butter of the plains people. Henri put a generous portion of it in each of our two large frying-pans, and dropped the cut and salted fish into it as soon as it was hot. As the pieces began to brown a most delicious odor filled the lodge and made us more hungry than ever, if that were possible. At last, when it seemed that we could not wait another moment, Henri declared that our meal was ready, and began heaping our plates with fish.

Star Woman passed her plate to him. 'Brother, give me some of it,' she said.

'No! No!' her sisters cried.

'No, little sister! You must not even touch the forbidden food!' No Runner told her.

'I must learn to be brave in all things, if I am to become a warrior woman. Brother, give me a piece of the fish!' she cried.

Henri did as she asked. She broke off a portion of the fish, smelled it, and said: 'Listen, O you Under-Water People! I am about to eat some of your food. In return, I shall make a sacrifice to you. I pray you to take pity upon me. Let me survive all dangers: let me live! Give us all long life, and plenty, and happiness, O you People-of-the-Deep-Waters!' And with that, while her sisters and brother stared at her with the utmost horror, she popped the morsel of fish into her mouth and ate it, and exclaimed: 'Oh, how good! The best food I ever tasted!'

'Oh, little sister!' was all that Grouse Woman could say.

'Star Woman, now you have got yourself into trouble!' her other sister told her.

'But listen, sisters!' she said, as she took up another piece of the fish. 'Your men here and our almost-brother have eaten fish all their lives and nothing has happened to them; therefore it is not reasonable to think that I shall be punished for doing it!'

'Ha! Truly, there is something in that!' No Runner said, very thoughtfully.

The White Beaver

How one thing leads to another in our life experiences! Star Woman's eating of the fish was apparently a very trivial thing, yet — as you shall learn — had she not done so, our great adventure of that summer would never have come to pass!

CHAPTER V

A WHITE BEAVER

When we were crossing over the high ridge divide two days before, I had had glimpses of the upper one of the two Inside Lakes. As far as I could see it ran back into the very heart of the rock-walled, steep-sloped, snow-capped mountains, and in its farther reaches several small islands rose from its blue, sparkling depths. As I lay on my couch this night, after our feast of fish, and sleepily watched the dying fire, I recalled what I had seen of the lake, and thought that it would be great fun to explore it with the log canoe; yes, and to go to the very head of the streams that fed it, even to the summit of the great 'Backbone-of-the-World,' as the Pi-ku'ni called the Rockies, and drink of the waters running westward to the far Pacific Ocean.

The next morning, when Star Woman, as usual, had come over to share our early meal, I spoke of my plan.

'Almost-brother, almost-sister,' I said, 'there is something that I very much want to do, and I want you to do it with me. I want to put bedding, food,

and other things that will be needed into the log canoe, and go in it, camping here and there, to the very head of the upper lake, and from there climb to the top of the mountains and look down upon their western slopes. It will all be great fun. Say yes. Say that you will go with me!'

'Not I!' No Runner exclaimed. 'The land is for the people of the land, and the water is for the Water People. I shall stay where I belong!'

'I have eaten fish and nothing has happened to me. I feel well and strong this morning. I will not fear the water and those who live in it: I will go with you if brother will,' said the other.

'There spoke the brave heart! Little sister, I am proud of you!' Henri told her. 'If the canoe were only large enough, we would all go up there in it. What fun to go where no man has ever been! What fun to stop here and there at places that can only be reached by water! And think of the reward: the beavers and otters that you will trap; the game that you will kill! No Runner, young brother, you must change your mind about this. Come! Say that you will go with them!'

We had heard some one approach the lodge and pause near the doorway, listening to our talk. He now entered, and we saw that it was no other than Mad Plume. Henri invited him to be seated upon

his couch, and the women hurried to set food before him.

He was smiling and cheerful enough as he made a remark about the fine morning it was, and then said, more seriously: 'Of course I heard your talk as I stood outside. Little daughter, your words gave me much pleasure. My son, surely you will not refuse to go where your sister offers to go! It is true that the Under-Water People are a dreadful people, but I believe that we can propitiate them. At least we will try to do so. Now, the three of you gather what you will need and put it all in the canoe, and then Old Sun and I will pray and sacrifice to the Under-Water People for you. When we have done that you shall start off on your trip of discovery. I do not say that it will not be dangerous. But it is only by meeting danger and conquering that you can become a warrior, that your sister can become a war woman, and that is the great desire of my heart. There! I have said it! Hurry, now, and prepare to start off!'

Star Woman sprang to her father's side, gave him a hug and a kiss, and went running home to gather her belongings. No Runner began half-heartedly to collect his things.

'If you were to tell me that I could join a war party starting out against the enemy how gladly

I would go! But this is different. I take no shame in saying that I fear the Under-Water People!' he exclaimed.

'You shall conquer that fear!' the chief grimly answered, and went off to consult with Old Sun regarding the coming ceremony.

Our preparations for the trip were soon made. We loaded into the canoe some bedding, a small lodge skin, a kettle, frying-pan, axe, rope, Star Woman's pouches containing needles, awls, sinew thread, leather, and so on, and our traps and weapons. By that time news of what we were to do had spread through camp, and a great crowd gathered to see us off. On the shore of the lake, close to the edge of the water, sat Old Sun and Mad Plume, on either side of a little fire that their women had built for them. While the old medicine man fastened a stone to a bundle of sacrifices made up of a piece of red trade cloth, a bow and arrows captured from the enemy, a couple of bear claws attached to four eagle tail-feathers, and Star Woman's offering of a pair of beautifully embroidered new moccasins, Mad Plume filled and prepared to light a big, long-stemmed pipe. When all was ready he handed it to Old Sun and placed a live coal on top of the tobacco. The old man started it going, blew whiffs of smoke to the sky,

the earth, and out toward the surface of the lake, as he did so, pointing the stem of the pipe in these several directions.

'O Sun! O Above People! And you, Earth, our Mother, have pity upon us!' he cried. 'Intercede now for us with these dwellers in the deep waters.'

'Oh, powerful Under-Water People! We make sacrifice to you —' here Mad Plume flung the little bundle of offerings far out upon the lake — 'and we pray you to have pity upon us all, every man, every woman, every child of our people. We especially pray you to take pity upon those who are about to travel upon your deep waters. No Runner, pity him, seize him not, permit him to survive all the dangers that may lurk along his way!

'Generous Raven, the white youth who has become one of us, oh, take pity upon him, you powerful dwellers in the deep waters. Let him survive! Let him survive all dangers!

'Star Woman! Star Woman! Star Woman! Star Woman! O you Under-Water People, even her name is sacred! Pity her! Pity her! Allow her to survive all dangers, that she may become what we all desire, a great warrior woman of whom we shall all be proud!'

The old man ended his prayer and Mad Plume nodded to us, and we cried out: 'Yes! O powerful

Under-Water People! Have pity upon us! Let us survive!'

And then the great crowd behind us chorused: 'O Above People! O Earth-Mother! O Under-Water People! Have pity for them. Take pity upon us all!'

So ended the ceremony. It had been a very solemn one. As we arose from our place near the little fire, and got into the canoe and pushed out, I saw tears glistening in the eyes of many of our well-wishers, and I do not deny that mine were not a little moist. That I should be prayed for so feelingly came to me as a great surprise. Can you wonder that my heart went out to them — these simple people who had so generously made me a member of their little community?

The crowd neither cheered nor waved adieus to us as I paddled the canoe out upon the lake: it was the custom of the Blackfeet to pray silently for those departing upon various adventures, and to welcome the returning with the most extravagant demonstrations of joy. No Runner sat in the bow of the canoe, facing forward, and my almost-sister in the center, facing me. They were both tensely gripping the sides of the craft and looking down into the water, and Star Woman's face was gray from fear, and I doubted not that her brother's

was, too. The shoal water extended out into the lake for some distance, so clear that the bottom could be seen at twenty feet. We passed suddenly from its transparency to the opaque blackness of great depth, and both my passengers shivered.

'The first thing you have to learn,' I told them, 'is that you must not grip the sides of the canoe and sway with it, for if you do you will soon tip it bottom-side up. You must learn to sit at ease in it and sway your bodies in the direction opposite to its swaying.'

They did not answer me, but they did let go their holds. It was some little time before they ceased staring down into the water, and looked off at the various objects I pointed to and talked about. I soon found that paddling the heavily loaded canoe was hard work; had there been a head wind I could not have made any progress. I worked it slowly along up the eastern shore and in an hour or so landed upon the lake's lone island, a few hundred yards in length and partly timbered. There was not a living thing upon it except a mother grouse and her brood of young, nor did we find any signs of game animals ever having been upon it. No Runner declared that he was much disappointed; he had hoped to find deer and elk there, and to kill some meat to take along in the canoe.

'Never mind the meat. Just now we need two more paddles. You and Star Woman must help paddle the canoe,' I told him, and I got out the axe and soon made them, rudely fashioned but serviceable, from a length of a quaking aspen that I cut down. We then set out again, and by the time we arrived at the mouth of the inlet my companions had fairly well learned the art of paddling. But, much to my surprise, we soon found that we could make no headway up the swift stream with the paddles, and must resort to the cordelle if we were ever to get to the upper lake.

The canoe had no thwarts, there was nothing to which to fasten our rope, and if we tied it around the body of the craft, it would then be too short for use. Star Woman solved that trouble by deftly and quickly braiding some willow shoots to piece out the rope, and then, with her in the bow to fend the canoe out from the bank and the various obstructions along it, No Runner and I easily drew it up over the first of the rapids. The second rapid was worse, and so overhung with brush that we had to get into the icy water and pull and push the canoe up by hand. We did not want to wet our tanned skin clothing and moccasins — I was now dressed, like my friend, in Blackfeet shirt and leggings, and breech-clout — so we stripped down

to the breech-clout and waded in. Star Woman clapped one of her hands to her mouth in surprise, and stared at me.

'Did I not see it with my own eyes, never would I have believed that skin could be so white!' she cried. 'Why, that part of you under the water gleams like the skin of a fish's belly!'

'Yes! And his face and hands are as dark as ours. He is a real pinto!' No Runner said.

'Doubtless I shall turn into a spotted trout if I have to do much of this kind of work,' I told them, and then we laughed. Never were there three young people more light-hearted than we. We laughed harder when No Runner said, as an afterthought: 'Well, if you turn into a gleaming trout, I shall become a black-backed, brown-bellied sucker fish!'

And now, wherever there was a strip of sandy or muddy shore, every step that we made was in the footprints of some kind of game, deer, elk, moose, bear, and even buffalo, and several times we had glimpses of deer and elk bounding out of our way into the brush. And fish! Down in the deep pools there were hundreds of them, whitefish, suckers, and three distinct varieties of trout, from a foot up to three feet in length. These were, as I long afterward learned, the cut-throat trout, running up to

five and six pounds in weight; the Dolly Varden trout, running up to twenty pounds; and the lake trout, which I myself have caught, of forty pounds weight in the upper lake.

Let me say here, too, that I know of no place where environment has such marked effect upon the growth of fish as is here shown. In the somewhat shallow and fairly warm water of the lower lake, plant and minute mollusk life is very abundant. This is the sole food of the whitefish; they so thrive upon it that they average three pounds in weight, and sometimes attain a weight of eight pounds. In the exceedingly deep glacial water of the upper lake, where the food is not anywhere near so abundant, the whitefish average only two pounds in weight, and their flesh is never fat, like that of their lower lake brothers. The trout in the two lakes, being carnivorous, do not vary in size and richness of flesh.

We saw much beaver sign as we proceeded on up the river but it did not tempt us to stop; we knew that men from camp would soon be trapping there, and that we would find trapping ground away up the lake that we could have all to ourselves. After a couple of hours of hard work we arrived at the foot of the last rapid, crossed a deep pool, and sat down on the sandy bank to rest. Star Woman re-

mained in the canoe, which we had drawn close to us.

Just one more short tow and we would be in the upper lake. From where we sat we could look out upon it, stretching away to the foot of a distant mountain, and unruffled by even a single puff of wind. The view was enchanting, enticing. I felt an insistent urge to hurry on. On and on past the distant mountain, to see what was concealed from us by a high, jutting point of rock. I was sure that, from where we were, no more than half the length of the lake was in sight.

'Almost-brother, is it not beautiful out there?' I asked.

Star Woman cut off his answer. 'Oh, look! Look!' she hissed.

We turned our eyes toward her and saw her rigidly staring across the pool. And well she might, for there, crawling from the water out upon a gravelly bar, was a very large beaver whose fur was as white as new-fallen snow! I could hardly believe my eyes! It did not seem possible that there could be a beaver of that color!

My next thought was of my rifle, lying in the canoe. My hand itched to grasp it, to take quick aim and kill the animal, but No Runner's low 'don't move!' held me.

The White Beaver

The beaver limped badly as he waddled out of the water. He half-turned and sat up on his haunches, well braced by his broad, flat, black, scaly tail, and we plainly saw that his left front paw was missing, that the stump of the leg was bleeding slightly, and staining red the pure white fur. For all of a minute he sat up there on the gravel, looking toward the lake, sniffing the air, and now and then shaking his maimed leg stump as though in great pain. And he whimpered, too, a plaintive cry it was, and often repeated, like that of a sick and feeble child. And that was more than Star Woman could bear. 'Oh, poor one!' she cried, and turned toward us, as though to ask our sympathy for the animal.

Like a flash the beaver was into the water, and all too late No Runner and I sprang for our rifles. For a moment we saw him swimming up the rapids and well below the surface, and then he was gone. A little later he bobbed up on the surface of the lake, paused for a backward glance in our direction, and then swam swiftly on and on, cutting an ever-widening ripple that we could follow with our eyes long after we had lost sight of the animal.

'Oh! Oh! A white beaver! A medicine beaver! And we didn't get it!' No Runner cried, and threw himself back upon the sand in utter dejection.

'It is sacred! The gods did not intend that you should kill it!' said Star Woman.

'You are mistaken!' her brother answered. 'What said Sun to Scar Face, that time he visited him in his far-off splendid lodge? When he instructed the youth as to how the people should live, what they should do, he said of the animals: "All of them are for the people, for their food, for their shelter and clothing, all excepting the white buffalo and the white beaver. These shall they also kill, but only for a sacrifice to me. They must not eat even a mouthful of the meat. They must tan the skins of those that they kill, tan them very soft, the flesh side very white, and hang them upon the center post of the great lodge which they are to build for me every summer, in the moon of ripe berries!"'

'Yes, that is so,' Star Woman admitted.

'And he also said to Scar Face: "And to those who kill sacred animals, and make sacrifice to me of their white, tanned skins, great reward shall be theirs. They shall have success in all that is for their good, and long life, they and their dear ones!"'

'Yes. He said that, too!' Star Woman agreed. 'But you misunderstood me. I mean that Sun does not intend that this white beaver shall be

killed by any of us. Just see how he protects it. Last night it freed itself from a trap of one of our people, and, here this morning, on his way to seek a new home, he escapes being shot by you and our almost-brother.'

'Your reasoning is not good,' No Runner replied. 'Were Sun protecting the white one, he would never have got into the trap. That he escaped was the trapper's fault, his carelessness; he set his trap in such a manner that, instead of quickly drowning, the beaver was able to crawl out upon the shore, or maybe upon a log, and gnaw his leg in two. Then, with your sudden turning to us, and your cry of "Poor one!" you drew his attention to us. Had you not done that, we might have quietly, slowly, got hold of our rifles and killed him!'

'That is it! Blame me! Poor me! Whatever goes wrong is always my fault!' Star Woman answered, and began to cry.

'Oh, don't quarrel!' I told them.

'No! No! Don't cry, little sister,' said No Runner, springing up and drawing the girl from the canoe, and embracing her. 'Don't cry! I don't blame you, you just couldn't help what you did. It is all right. Somewhere away up there along the lake, or on one of the lake streams, the white one

will make a new home for himself, and we shall trap him. Yes, we shall certainly trap him, though it takes us all summer to do it!'

'And I shall do all that I can to help you,' she said, kissing him and smiling.

'Well, let us go! Let us get after this white one at once!' I proposed.

'We need not hurry,' said No Runner. 'The white one is sick. He will go into a house, or a den of some of his people, somewhere, and remain very quiet until his leg heals. But once he begins to move about, we shall not have to look long to find him, for he will leave on sandbar and mudbank a three-legged trail.'

I saw at once the good sense in that, and proposed that we camp for the night right where we were. In a half-hour's time we had the little lodge set up under the cottonwoods bordering the outlet, a pile of firewood beside it and everything as it should be within. We then set out upon discovery, to see what the near-by country was like, and to kill some meat.

Crossing the narrow belt of cottonwoods, we found ourselves at the edge of a broad, well-grassed bottom that extended out across the valley to the edge of the steep, heavily timbered slope of the Arctic-Atlantic divide, and well out upon it, and

not far from the lake shore we saw a small band of buffalo, cows and calves — not a bull among them. We drew back into the timber and went up to the shore of the lake. From the edge of the water it sloped gently up to the level of the flat, and so afforded perfect shelter to us in approaching the herd. We were not long in arriving at a point opposite the feeding animals, and then, sneaking to the top of the bank and looking out through a clump of brush, found that we were within close range of the nearer ones.

'You do the killing!' No Runner told me. 'Shoot that two-year-old cow. She has no calf and looks to be very fat.'

I took careful aim at the cow, at a point just back of the shoulder, and well down, and at the boom! of my rifle she leaped high from the ground, and then, strangely enough, she did not attempt to follow the frightened band off down the flat, but came running straight toward the lake, and passed near us and fell upon the sands and was dead.

'Ha! Almost-brother, what good luck that is for us!' cried No Runner as we hurried toward the cow. 'She ran straight and fell right there, where we can toss the meat into the canoe. You go bring it here, and we will do the butchering.'

I reloaded my rifle and hurried back to the river, and had no trouble in pulling the canoe up the last short rapid and into the still water of the lake. I got in and paddled leisurely off along the shore. The clearness of the water surprised me: I could see the sandy bottom at a depth of thirty feet or more. All around me and as far off as I could see, trout big and little were leaping, more in play, I thought, than for the few insects that were flying about.

I whirled the canoe around and looked up at the long, gray, rock-walled summit of a mountain that sloped down to the west shore of the lake. Below the wall were long slopes of talus that were criss-crossed by distinct game trails, trails of bighorn, no doubt. From the foot of the talus to the shore of the lake, a mile or more, were groves of quaking aspen, pine, and fir, interspersed with small grass meadows, and in several of these I saw some deer and elk moving about. On a broad bit of prairie back of the first point jutting into the lake were some buffalo. From somewhere away off upon the lake there came to me the weird, laughing call of a loon.

I laughed, too, as I turned the canoe and paddled toward my companions. I said to myself how fortunate I was to be camping and hunting in this beautiful, rich country of the Inside Lakes, with

such tried and true friends as were No Runner and Star Woman.

We took what we wanted of the carcass of the buffalo cow, the boss ribs, tongue, loin, and a set of side ribs, and then No Runner offered the remainder to the wolves, or rather the wolf-god.

'Listen, Ancient Wolf!' he cried. 'We make sacrifice to you! All this fat meat we leave for the use of yourself and your many children. Have pity upon us! Give us of your power, we pray you, so that we too may avoid the dangers that are everywhere about us!'

'Yes! Ancient one, pity us!' Star Woman murmured, and I echoed her words.

We had boiled boss ribs — the hump ribs of the buffalo — for our evening meal, and never was there better, more tender meat than that. Unlike other parts of the body, the meat that covers the dorsal ribs, the ribs between the shoulders of the buffalo — yes, and game animals of all kinds, and cattle too — is very tender when freshly killed. Few hunters seem to know that. How many of them I have seen chewing a round steak from an animal that they had just killed and between bites cursing its toughness, when by boiling the boss ribs no more than fifteen minutes they could have had a delicious feast!

We ate heartily, then lay back upon our soft robe couches and enjoyed the blaze and warmth of our cheerful little lodge fire.

'Let us stay up a long time, and tell stories,' No Runner proposed.

But almost at once we became sleepy, and turned in, he and I together on one side of the fire, and Star Woman on the other side, after putting some half-green sticks that would burn a long time upon the coals.

I had no more than dropped asleep, I thought, when No Runner gave me a poke in the ribs that made me gasp. 'Listen!' he hissed, as I jerked myself up to a sitting position, and reached out for my rifle.

CHAPTER VI

HEAD-CRUSHER, THE GRIZZLY

I HEARD the shuffling tread of heavy feet outside. The fire had died down to a bed of ash-covered coals. No Runner brushed past me, groped around for some sticks, raked the coals together and put them on it, and began blowing to start a flame. The shuffling footsteps sounded nearer and nearer, and ceased just outside the doorway and to the left of it. Then they began again, and were accompanied by a loud snuffling at the edge of the lodge-skin as the animal moved along past the doorway, which was hung with a leather curtain. On that side of it lay our buffalo meat on a widespread parfleche, and when the animal came opposite it, it stopped again and let out a tremendous, long-drawn snort, as much as to say: 'Ha! I have come close to that which I seek!'

'It is a bear! It is coming in! Hadn't I better shoot and try to frighten it away?' I whispered to No Runner.

'No!' he answered, and went on blowing the coals.

Another heavy animal was approaching the

lodge from behind and adding its snorts to those of the one near the doorway. It came to the very edge of the lodge, and shuffled and snorted along, and with a terrible, hoarse roar apparently sprang upon the first comer. Then what a mixup there was! What fearful roaring and bawling and wrestling and turning and thudding of heavy blows and snapping together of mighty jaws!

Star Woman had awakened without a cry and groped her way across to us. Regardless of the appalling roaring and struggling outside, No Runner kept steadily blowing the coals, and the wood now suddenly burst into a flame, and at the same time we heard one of the animals go bounding and snorting away and into the river with a mighty splash. The other one came back to the lodge, just opposite the meat pile, and as it began to root at the well-pegged lodge-skin, No Runner snatched a brand from the fire and thrust that under it, and at that the bear went off into the timber as fast as he could go, letting out a loud 'woof!' at every jump.

'Ha! That is what frightens the sticky-mouths! Fire; that is what makes them run!' No Runner cried.

'I was just going to shoot my rifle when you poked the fire-stick out,' I said.

'It is well that you didn't. Had you wounded

him, he would have torn his way in here and maybe killed us all,' he answered.

'Poor me! I must tell it; I was terribly frightened. I am afraid that I can never become a war woman!' Star Woman lamented.

'Why, little sister, that is nothing. Weren't we frightened as well as you? Of course we were! But that will not prevent us becoming warriors. As I understand it, a warrior is one who, although his heart is filled with fear, still forces himself to face the enemy and do his best to win!'

We put more wood on the fire and listened for the return of the bear, and after a time concluded that he would not come back. However, we did not intend to take any chances, and in turn kept the little fire going the rest of the night. When daylight came, we went out for a look around before preparing our morning meal. We went first to the canoe, and found it just as we had left it, drawn well out upon the sand at the edge of the outlet of the lake. All around it were the tracks of two bears, one of average size, the other of huge size, as was indicated by the footprints. We stared at them for some time, and I measured a sharp impression of a hind foot in the wet sand at the edge of the water: from the heel to the end of the claws it was seventeen inches long!

'There can be no doubt about it! Old Head-Crusher made those tracks! He it was who fought off the other bear last night and tried to get in to our meat pile!' No Runner exclaimed.

'I just thought that it was Head-Crusher when I heard that terrible roar he made!' said my almost-sister.

'Yes, of course it was,' No Runner agreed. 'No other than Head-Crusher would have tried to nose under the lodge-skin. Bears don't do that. No animals do except skunks; they will come in, tail up, and look you right in the eyes while they are taking your meat!'

'I think that Head-Crusher must have found the cow carcass, else he would have come smelling around the lodge again,' said Star Woman.

'We'll go see,' said No Runner, and led off along the shore. When we neared the carcass, a couple of wolves sneaked away from it, and then a kit fox trotted down and tore at the meat until we were within twenty steps of it, and growled hoarsely at us as he backed off a little way. We found that the bear had been there — his huge tracks were all around — and that there was very little left of the carcass. One of the hams had been eaten to the bone and the other was about half gone! Allowing for the gorge that the two wolves had had there

— and we knew by the tracks that there had been only the two — it did not seem possible that a bear could have eaten that quantity of meat in a night.

We stared and stared at the denuded bones, and finally No Runner said: 'We have had surprising adventures since we started out yesterday morning. Let us go sit on the edge of the bank there, and think about what we had best do.'

We went up the slope and looked out upon the flat. There were some buffalo in the lower part of it, perhaps the herd that we had approached the day before. We sat down in the grass at the edge of the sand slope, and looked off up the still lake at the mountains, the sharp peaks of some of them blood-red in the rising sunlight. Again I thought that this long, clear body of water in its setting of giant mountains must surely be the most grandly beautiful place in all the world. The beauty of it all was so great that it actually hurt!

Star Woman and I held our peace, waiting to hear what our leader would say. Suddenly there came to our ears, from somewhere far back in the mountains, a tremendous, booming roar that echoed and reëchoed from one side of the valley to the other.

'What was that?' I cried, springing to my feet. 'There isn't a cloud in the sky; it wasn't thunder!'

'It was ice; falling ice,' No Runner told me. 'Back there in the mountains are great stretches of thick ice. Tall cliffs of ice resting on top of still higher cliffs of rock, so I have heard, and often great pieces of the ice break off and fall, making the thunder noise when they crash down upon the bottom of the canyons.'

'You have never been to any of these ice mountains?' I asked.

'I don't believe that any of our people have been farther up this valley than the head of the lake,' he answered. 'Here there is no across-the-mountains trail. When our men go to war against the West-Side tribes, they go by the Cutbank River trail. They tell of an ice cliff near it that rests upon a very high wall of rock, from which huge pieces of ice break nearly every night and crash to the bottom with a noise that is deafening.'

'But why do the hunters go only to the head of the lake?' I wanted to know.

'Why should they go farther!' he exclaimed. 'To do so they would have to cut trails for their horses, and the hard work would gain them nothing; out here in the more open country they can easily find all the food animals, all the fur animals that they want. But this is what I want to say,' he went on. 'If we can only catch that white beaver and sacri-

fice its skin, Sun will be very grateful, and will aid us in all that we undertake to do. And then, there is Head-Crusher. Just think what a *coup* it would be for us if we could kill him, he who has killed so many of our people! Now, here are two great undertakings, two very important things for us to do; two things that, if we succeed in doing them, will bring us great medicine from Sun and great honor from our people. We are very young for this great work; we haven't even had our medicine fast; we need strong help. I propose that we go straight back to camp and get old Talks-with-the Buffalo, he who has the beaver medicine, to pray for us for our success.'

'Oh, yes, brother! Let us do that!' cried Star Woman. 'Think what our father and Old Sun have done for us: we have come safely over the deep water and have not even seen one of the Under-Water People. And now, when Talks-with-the-Buffalo makes medicine for us, I feel sure that we shall succeed in trapping the white beaver and killing old Head-Crusher!'

'And what say you, almost-brother?' No Runner asked.

Was I to tell them that I thought the medicine men's prayers and sacrifices all foolishness? Not I! Moreover, deep down in my heart, I felt that I had

no right to call it foolishness. What right had I to say that there was nothing in these ancient beliefs?

I looked off upon the enticing lake and at the great ice-fields upon the summit of the range, and though they called me strongly, I resisted their appeal and answered: 'Yes. Let us go to the medicine man!'

Back to the lodge we went, loaded the meat and our bedding into the canoe, and shot down the short length of the river into the lower lake. On our way down, we decided that our discoveries must be kept secret, else all the hunters of the great camp would scatter out in search of the white beaver. As soon as we landed, No Runner and Star Woman hurried to their father, and I went to my lodge, where I found my almost-mothers embroidering moccasins for their men and happily singing as they worked. Henri and Antoine, of course, were off to their line of traps.

'Ha! Back so soon! What, then? Did the Under-Water People frighten you home?' Grouse Woman asked.

'We saw none of them,' I answered, and sat down beside her, and beckoned Eagle Woman to come and sit close on my other side.

'None must hear what I have to tell you. We

have had adventures and have come for help,' I said, and went on to tell them all about the white beaver, and old Head-Crusher, and that we had come back to get Talks-with-the-Buffalo to make sacrifices, and pray for us, before we made any attempt to trap the beaver and shoot the bear.

'You are doing the right thing! You are wise young people!' Eagle Woman exclaimed.

'Yes, wise children!' said Grouse Woman importantly, and almost I laughed in their faces, for neither of them was much older than I.

'It is to be a great medicine undertaking. Come. Let us go over to father's lodge and hear what he advises,' said the other.

We hurried from our lodge to Mad Plume's, and were just in time to hear No Runner and Star Woman ending the tale of our adventures. I noticed at once that the chief was deeply interested and excited over what he was hearing. His hands trembled as he tamped the pipe he was smoking.

'Truly, the gods have been good to me!' he exclaimed. 'Never was a man given better, braver children than mine, and with that they have good sense, too! You did the one right thing, my children, by coming back to us for advice and medicine

help. You shall have it, powerful help, and then you shall go seek Head-Crusher, and the white one, and I predict that you will succeed in your undertaking!'

'But you will go with them, you and our sons-in-law!' exclaimed one of Mad Plume's wives, the mother of No Runner and Star Woman.

'Not I! Nor any one else!' he answered decisively.

'Are you crazy?' the woman demanded. 'Do you mean to say that you will let these young, inexperienced children go by themselves to try to take the life of that terrible one, Head-Crusher?'

'I mean just that!' he answered. 'My prayers and my sacrifices to the gods have not been useless! They have marked out the trail of success and honor for my children to follow, and follow it my children shall, all by themselves, with all the medicine help that we can give them!'

'Do that, and you send them to their death! Head-Crusher will kill them!' the woman answered, and burst into tears. The other wife and Eagle Woman and Grouse Woman began to whimper.

'Stop that! Cease crying at once, and pray for success for your children!' the chief roared. 'I go now to consult with Talks-with-the-Buffalo,' he added, 'and when I return there will be trouble in

this lodge if I find you still moaning and whimpering! And mind this, all of you: keep what you have heard to yourselves!'

My almost-mothers and I returned to our lodge. Soon afterward, Henri and Antoine came home with their morning's catch, seven beaver and an otter, and No Runner and Star Woman followed them into the lodge.

'I can tell by your faces that something is up,' Henri told us in Blackfeet, as he sat down on his couch and began filling his pipe.

'Yes. We have had great adventures, and are going to have more!' No Runner burst out, and hurriedly told all that had happened to us.

I noticed that the two men exchanged glances and smiled as soon as the white beaver was mentioned, and when the tale was ended, Henri laughed, as he said: 'That white beaver lost his foot in a trap that I set. But that wasn't my fault: the chain broke, and the beaver hauled out on a sandbar and gnawed himself free. When we found the white furred foot in the trap, we were certainly surprised. We have heard of white beaver, but have never seen one. And knowing how much our people value a white beaver hide, we made up our minds to say nothing about our discovery, not even to our women, and do our best to

find where the white one had gone and then trap him, even if we were all summer in doing it.'

'Ha! You two don't trust your women much!' Eagle Woman pouted.

'Oh, we do! We do!' Antoine quickly asserted.

'Yes. Certainly we trust you!' Henri said; 'but then, you know, you might have said something about it when you weren't thinking; and then — oh, well ——'

'"Oh, well!"' Eagle Woman mocked. 'You can't explain. Not to trust your wife! Take shame. Oh! You are ashamed! Just see how silly he looks!'

And at that we all laughed, for both he and Antoine, big men that they were, had the appearance of a couple of children caught in an act of mischief.

'Oh, well, now,' Henri repeated and leaned over and tried to kiss Eagle Woman, but she sprang away from him to a place beside me, and then we did laugh, for he looked sillier than ever.

'Oh, well, enough of this foolishness!' said Antoine. 'Now, then, you young ones, what do you propose to do? You have come after us to help you, I suppose?'

'You can give us some advice, if you will. Talks-with-the-Buffalo is to make medicine for us, and then we are going back by ourselves and count

coup on Head-Crusher, and trap the white beaver,' No Runner answered, with an airy lift of the head.

'Say you so! Ha! I know one young man who is not to go hunting that old bear, not unless I go with him!' Henri exclaimed.

'Oh, don't say that! Mad Plume has planned that we are to go back up there by ourselves!' I begged.

'No! Don't say a word against our plan, elder brothers-in-law,' said No Runner. 'And just think! When Talks-with-the-Buffalo makes medicine for us, we shall have powerful help in our undertaking!'

Just then Mad Plume came in. 'Well, I have talked with our beaver-medicine man,' he told us, 'and all is arranged. I have given him two horses to make medicine for you. Be ready, for you will soon hear his call. He will not mention the white beaver nor Head-Crusher in his prayers; neither must you.'

'Chief, I don't at all like this,' said Henri. 'These children are too young, too inexperienced to be permitted to go off by themselves and attempt to kill that terrible bear. I am responsible for what Generous Raven does; his father gave him into my care. I feel that I cannot let him take this great risk!'

'Well, listen to me,' Mad Plume answered.

'None can say that I do not love my children. They are everything to me. All the same, I would rather see them dead than that they grow up to be nothing-persons. I want to see them make great names for themselves. They are not inexperienced; it is time for them to begin to prove what really is in them. I feel that the gods themselves have pointed out the honor trail for them to follow, else why did they see that white beaver — and why, that very evening, did Head-Crusher come nosing around their lodge and then go to feed upon the carcass of the buffalo they had killed? Just as sure as I sit here the gods directed that. I admit that, even after Talks-with-the-Buffalo has made medicine for them, they will be in some danger when they make their attack upon Head-Crusher. But true greatness can only be attained by risk of life. My children shall take that risk. I tell you this: you will make a great mistake if you do not allow Generous Raven to take that risk with them!'

When the chief finished what he had to say, Henri and Antoine looked at one another questioningly, and then the latter said: 'You know as well as I do, my friend, that there is something in this sacred medicine! I think that we should allow the boy to do as he wants in this matter!'

'If anything should happen to him, what could

we say to his father? There would be no excuse for us. Ours would be the blame,' the other answered.

'I cannot explain it — there is much that we can never understand, but somehow I feel that the boy will come out all right in this adventure,' said Antoine.

I looked at Henri. Oh, how my heart beat as I waited for him to speak!

He looked at me very thoughtfully, thinking hard, and finally said, 'If we let you go back up there with No Runner and Star Woman, will you promise to be very careful?'

'Yes! Oh, yes!' I cried.

'Well, then, you may go!' he concluded, and I felt as though a great load had been lifted from me. Without doubt I was the happiest youth in all the world!

'Well said, son-in-law! Well said!' Mad Plume exclaimed.

Just then the door curtain was thrust aside, and looking in, a girl said to us, 'Talks-with-the-Buffalo calls you!'

We all went over to the medicine man's lodge. He was in his accustomed seat at the back of it and exactly opposite the doorway. Next to him, on his left, were his two women, and from them, around almost to the doorway, was a row of men, medicine

men and aged warriors all of them. Mad Plume, Henri, and Antoine took their places in their line in the order named. On the right of the host, back as close to the edge of the lodge as they could sit, were a number of women. No Runner took a seat in front of them, and close to the old man, and I came next, and then Star Woman. As she took her seat, I heard much excited whispering among the women.

Said one of them: 'I never thought that I would see one of our kind in that sacred place!'

'She is a boy-girl!' said another, 'and without shame!'

'Shameless yourself!' another chided. 'Would that I could have had such honor!'

Old Talks-with-the-Buffalo turned and looked at the second of the whisperers. 'Terrible Tongue,' he said to her, 'I did not invite you here; I did not see you come in. You may go!'

There was a general titter as the woman slunk out of the lodge. She was a notorious gossip, a woman of evil tongue. She had been married three times, and thrice sent back to her parents' lodge, each of her men declaring that death itself were better than listening to her constant chatter of insinuation and lying slander.

In preparation for the coming ceremony, Talks-

with-the-Buffalo and his women had painted their faces, hair, hands, and the moccasins they wore with dull-red native paint — clay highly impregnated with oxide of iron — the sacred color. He now took a large coal of fire from the fireplace with a pair of red-painted wooden tongs — shaped from a forked willow branch — and laid it before the first one of his women. He then took a bunch of long, stringy tree moss from a small, red-painted pouch and laid it upon the coal. A gray, pungent smoke began to rise from it, and as he and his women reached out, grasped handfuls of it, and passed their hands down along their bodies, thus purifying themselves, they began a low and plaintive song, the song of the Ancient Beaver. They sang it once, and the first woman placed the buckskin-wrapped bundle of the beaver medicine before the old man. They sang the song a second time, and he removed the first wrapping; a third time, and he removed another wrapping. Then, while all present, the men on the one side of the lodge and the women on the other, joined in the singing of the song the fourth time — sacred number — the old man spread out the last wrapping, a large tanned and painted beaver skin, and the medicine lay revealed.

It was a long pipestem, beautifully decorated

with bands of woven colored porcupine quills, and bright feathers and bits of fur of many different birds and animals. On each side of the stem was a piece of beaver cutting, two peeled willow sticks about eight inches long and an inch in diameter. The ends of them showed plainly the marks of the beaver's chisel-like teeth.

The old man now gently raised the sacred stem, pointed it to the sky, the earth, and the four world directions, and his voice quivered with emotion as he prayed, 'Oh, my sacred one of the Sun! You, Ancient Beaver! Have pity upon us! All of us, men, women, children, oh, how poor, how ignorant we are! You have power! — wisdom! We ask you to help us! We beg you to ask Sun and all the gods of the sky, the earth, and the deep waters, to pity us, to give us all long life and happiness!'

The prayer ended, he reverently laid the pipe-stem back upon its wrapping, took up a small pouch of the sacred paint, and motioned No Runner to move closer to him. He then began to paint the youth's hair and face with the sacred color, and as he did so he prayed: 'Pity this youth, No Runner, O Ancient Beaver! Oh, my powerful medicine, ask the powerful gods to favor him, to give him long life, and success in all his undertakings. He now goes from us in quest of certain animals; preserve

him from all the dangers that may be along his trail! Grant that we may see him returning to us, bringing with him the skins of those certain animals which he seeks!'

After No Runner had been painted and prayed for, I took his place and the ceremony was repeated for me. The old man then called Star Woman, and as she stepped past us and sat with bowed head at his side, there was a general stir of surprise and murmured questioning among the audience.

As the old man began his painting, he offered up the same prayer for her that he had for No Runner and me, and then added: 'And even more than that we ask of you, O powerful gods! This beautiful and good girl here, Star Woman, is the pride of her father's heart, the joy of us all. It is our hope that she may become, even as that great virgin Running Eagle was, a leader of warriors against the enemy, and a support and comfort to the poor and afflicted at home. Preserve her from all danger, O powerful ones! Open the way for her to accomplish this, her great desire as well as ours. Especially protect her, O my medicine, and you, trailing across the sky, you, maker of the days!'

'Ai! Ai! Protect Star Woman! Help her to become our virgin war leader! Give her long life and

happiness, O you powerful gods!' the people there assembled prayed, and then suddenly a deep silence fell upon us.

The old man bent over and lowered his hands gently upon the girl's head. Her slender body was quivering with suppressed sobs. We were all deeply affected by the old man's prayers, by her sincerity. We all felt that she was one set apart from us; that she was above us; that she was possessed of a high sacredness beautiful in its appeal to all that was best in us! Never have I seen greater solemnity than was expressed by the faces of the men across from me. I turned and looked at the women; tears were streaming down their cheeks; some were so affected that they covered their heads with their robes and cried!

'You may go to your place,' the old man gently said to Star Woman.

As she returned to my side, he passed the beaver cuttings to his women, took up his rattle and began a new beaver song in which all joined. At the same time the two women placed the beaver cuttings in their mouths and, holding their hands up in front of them in a drooping position, just as a beaver does with its little forepaws, they raised and lowered their bodies from the waist up in time to the song. Occasionally they took the sticks from their

mouths, held them straight up, and went through the motions of a beaver gnawing down a tree. After this song was ended, the old man fitted the medicine pipestem to a large black stone bowl, passed it to Mad Plume to light, and it was then smoked by the men in turn, each one offering up a prayer for the general welfare of the people, and for us three particularly, as he blew the smoke in the sacred four world directions. Following this there were more prayers by Talks-with-the-Buffalo, and more beaver songs. Then, one after another, the men got up and danced with the medicine pipe, and both the men and the women sang the beaver dance song for them. And so the ceremony ended.

'There! It is finished!' the old man told us, and we all filed out of the lodge and went our several ways.

Mad Plume and Star Woman came over to our lodge to partake of the little feast which the women were hurriedly preparing. After we finished eating, and the pipe was going around, he, and then Henri and Antoine, gave us many instructions as to what we should and should not do. We listened attentively, promised to follow them. It was late when we finally lay down and slept.

CHAPTER VII

STAR WOMAN KILLS A BUFFALO

We arose very early on the following morning, had our bath in the chill water of the lake, and hurried back to the lodge. Star Woman and her father came over to join us in our simple meal, and while we were eating Talks-with-the-Buffalo came in with a gun. He was given the honor seat, at the back of the lodge, and the women set food before him.

After some general talk, he said to us: 'Well, my children, no doubt you are wondering why the old man is lugging a gun around with him. You shall learn! I had a strong dream last night. My medicine came to me and said: "In what you are doing for these young people, you are overlooking a very important thing. You are praying that young Star Woman may become a great virgin warrior. Well, how can she ever become one without having weapons and learning how to use them?"

'That is all my medicine said, but it was enough. I awoke. I said to myself: "I am old. I can no longer hunt nor go to war, so she shall have my gun!" Daughter, here it is, and the powder horn

and ball pouch, both full, and two extra flints. I am very glad that you are to have them.'

'Oh, how generous you are! I shall not forget this kindness!' Mad Plume exclaimed.

As for Star Woman, she murmured something to the old man, so low that we could not hear, and took the gun and the other things like one in a daze, handling the gun in such an awkward manner as she laid it at her side that we all laughed.

'Take courage, sister, it will not bite you!' No Runner told her.

And at that she snatched the gun up with a firm grasp, and cried: 'Laugh if you will! I shall soon show you what I can do with it, even though I am a girl!'

'Ha! That is the way to talk! I know that you will make good use of the gun!' the old man told her.

At first sight I myself did not think much of the flintlock weapon.

We got an early start and paddled off up the lake, and this time No Runner had his bow and arrows as well as his gun. Both Henri and Antoine had cautioned us to be as quiet as possible in our quest of the white beaver, and advised the use of the bow in killing the meat we should need.

As we were approaching the island, Star Woman

proposed that we go ashore on it and teach her how to shoot her gun. So we landed, and after showing her just how to load it and aim it, we made a small blaze on a pine tree at a distance of about fifty yards, and told her to shoot at it. She flinched when the powder in the pan flashed up and the shot went wild, so we had her practice aiming the gun and pulling the trigger with powder only in the pan, until she became accustomed to its flashing hiss, and then had her load the barrel and fire at the blaze again. Much to our surprise, the ball struck within two hands'-breadths of it, and after several more trials she actually placed a ball in the blaze. I was not much surprised at that, for when I came to load the gun I had found that the barrel was rifled. I had thought it an ordinary smoothbore.

'Little sister, I think that you have a good medicine helper: you can shoot as well as I can!' No Runner said, as we returned to the canoe.

We went on up the lake, again cordelled the canoe up the swift river, and arrived at our camp at the foot of the upper lake before noon. Our lodge stood just as we had left it. We gathered a good pile of fuel for our evening fire, put thick layers of balsam boughs under our beds, ate some dried meat, and then returned to the canoe and

paddled out upon the lake, heading for our buffalo carcass. Upon landing we found that there was practically nothing left of it. The gnawed bones were scattered about in all directions; even the hide had been stripped of meat and lay shriveled and half-dry in the sun. Old Head-Crusher had been there again, his huge footprints having in places covered the tracks we had left along the shore. We found, too, numberless tracks of wolves, coyotes, foxes, and several of the baby-like tracks of the wolverine.

'Almost-brother, almost-sister,' I said, as I slumped down upon the sand, 'I am very low-hearted! I had thought out a good, safe way for us to kill old Head-Crusher, but what I planned cannot now be done!'

'Your plan — what was it?' No Runner asked.

'Just this: I intended that we should stick some brush up in the canoe, to make it look like a little island, then get into it and fasten it out there a little way, and sit quiet and watch for the bear to return to feed upon the carcass. We would then shoot him, and if we only wounded him and he plunged into the lake after us, we could paddle away faster than he could swim. But now, as you see, he will not return: well he knows that the cow meat has all been eaten!'

No Runner looked at me thoughtfully for a moment, and then laughed. 'I should like to know how you would fasten the canoe out there!' he exclaimed. 'What! Would you drive a peg into the water, and rope the canoe to it, just as you would picket a horse out on the land?' And he laughed again, and Star Woman laughed with him.

'No, I shouldn't do it just that way,' I answered. 'I should fasten one end of our long rope to a heavy stone and the other end to the canoe. I should then sink the stone to the bottom of the lake, and its weight would keep the canoe from drifting away!'

'Oh!' they exclaimed, and suddenly sobered and looked at one another in shamed confusion. I wanted to laugh at them then, but I never even smiled.

'Do it, almost-brother!' Star Woman cried. 'Laugh at us: we are the foolish ones, not you!'

'Yes! We might have known that when you said you would fasten the canoe out there you knew you could do it!' said No Runner.

'And your plan is still good!' he cried, clapping his hands together with a loud smack. 'We will kill some meat — a lot of meat, and pile it here. This place is right on old Head-Crusher's trail! It

surely is! He will soon be passing this way again, so all that we have to do is to keep bringing meat here, more meat than the wolves can eat, until he returns. Yes! How many times I have heard the old hunters say that bears have certain trails that they follow from valley to valley, from mountain to mountain. It is right along here that Head-Crusher passes from the mountains to the north of us, across to that wide, timbered valley, and these mountains to the south of us! Come! Let us go hunt some meat!'

'This is my thought,' said Star Woman. 'Head-Crusher may be sleeping just over there in that thick timber. When he awakes, he may say to himself: "Perhaps I overlooked something back there; maybe I shall find a little of that cow meat hidden away by the wolves; they are always hiding what they can't eat!" And back he will come, and we shall be out there waiting for him.'

'You may be right about that,' I said.

'Yes. Even if we don't bring some meat here to-day, when evening comes we may as well watch the place for a time,' No Runner agreed.

We climbed the sloping shore and looked out upon the wide flat. Luck was with us: a small band of buffalo was out in the center of it, and feeding toward the river.

'Ha! It will not be long before they will be right at the edge of the timber,' said No Runner.

'I have it,' I said. 'Let us take the canoe down the river to about where we think the buffalo will go to it to drink. We will then watch for them to come, and kill one, and put the meat in the canoe and bring it right here.'

'Yes! Yes! Let's do that!' No Runner agreed, and we were soon paddling back to the outlet.

We hurried down it to a point midway between the lakes, landed, and No Runner sneaked off through the brush to reconnoiter. He soon returned and said that we were below the place where the herd would come to water, and that we were to go with him at once. He led up along the shore for a couple of hundred yards, then climbed a tree until he could see out over the undergrowth of willows, and slid back to the ground.

'Just above us is a game trail: they are coming along it to water,' he told us.

We had but a few steps to go to the broad, dusty trail in the brush. As there was a slight breeze blowing from the north, we crossed it and concealed ourselves in a thick growth of red willows.

'I shall now show you what I can do with a gun. I am going to do this killing!' Star Woman said, as she drew the leather cover from the weapon.

'No, no! I shall do the killing with my bow. You forget that we are now on a great medicine hunt; that we must be as noiseless as possible,' said No Runner.

'Oh, let her shoot the animal! The boom of one gun will do no harm,' I told him.

No Runner shook his head. 'One can never tell: just the one gunshot may spoil all our plans,' he insisted.

'Listen to me!' I hurriedly pleaded. 'I do not believe that the distant boom of a gun will frighten these animals of the mountains. Why should it, when it is not different from the boom of falling ice that they are constantly hearing? Let her do the killing, almost-brother!'

'Ha! I never thought of that!' No Runner exclaimed. 'You for it, sister! See that your gun is well primed, and take careful aim just behind the shoulder and well down on the body before you fire!'

The fluttering and scolding of the buffalo-birds above the top of the brush now warned us to be ready. These little creatures, a dusky, small variety of blackbird, lived constantly with the buffalo from early spring until winter drove them to a warmer clime. They were true benefactors of the big, shaggy animals, perching upon their backs

the greater part of the time and keeping them free from flies and other insect pests. They were angry now because the brush overhanging the trail kept sweeping them from their perches. Star Woman whispered to us that she was sure they were saying some very bad things!

We soon heard the dull tread of the animals in the dust, and then they began to come into sight, cows and calves, yearlings and two-year-olds. The leader was a big cow of most disreputable appearance, her faded winter coat still clinging to the new growth in irregular, stringy patches. On she came, head down, the long whiskers on her lower jaw almost trailing upon the ground. When she was almost opposite us, I turned and looked at Star Woman. What a brave and graceful figure she was, standing so straight there in the brush, her gun half-raised, her eyes shining with excitement as she watched the old cow's ponderous advance along the trail.

Gradually she brought the gun to her shoulder, took careful aim as she had been directed to do, and pulled the trigger. Boom! went the gun, belching a thick, gray cloud of powder smoke out in front of us. With loud snorts of terror the herd turned and went crashing away through the brush, all but the old cow: through the powder haze I saw

her make a leap or two forward and fall spraddle-legged in the trail.

'Ha! You killed! Good!' No Runner exclaimed.

'I killed it! I killed it!' she cried, and kissed her brother, and then turned and kissed me, and ran to her kill.

'Ha! Kissing!' No Runner exclaimed disgustedly, wiping his cheek. 'That is no way to do! Hunters, warriors, do not kiss, you know!'

I did not say anything; all I knew was that the kiss made me feel very queer. I could not understand it.

Star Woman was dancing around the dead cow, and stooping to pat it here and there, judging of its fatness.

'What is the first thing to do?' No Runner asked her.

'Twist the head around and heave the body into shape for skinning,' she answered.

'No!' he snorted. 'The first thing a hunter does, after firing his gun, is to reload it as quickly as he can, for there is no knowing how soon he may need it, perhaps to save his life!'

'You are right, brother. I shall not forget that,' she meekly answered, and reloaded the weapon, and looked around and set it up against a tree a few steps from the trail.

'And when the hunter has reloaded his gun, he lays it close beside him when he starts to skin his kill!' said No Runner.

'That also will I remember!' she exclaimed, and brought back the gun.

We got the hide off the cow in no time, laid it flesh side up in the canoe, which we brought up to the end of the game trail, and then piled the meat upon the hide. Not all of it, for that was more than we could safely carry. The remainder we pitched into the river, so that we should not have out two attractions for Head-Crusher. Back we went up the river, cordelling the heavily loaded canoe where we could, and pulling and pushing it by hand where the rope could not be used, and late in the afternoon paddled out into the lake and landed our cargo at the remains of the old kill, all but the boss ribs and the tongue, which we reserved for our own use. We then paddled back to camp and had a well-earned rest and a good meal of broiled meat.

Just before sunset we draped the canoe with a quantity of alder brush and paddled it to a point about fifty yards out from the meat pile. I then let go our stone anchor and we began our watch for old Head-Crusher. No Runner was in the bow of the canoe, Star Woman in the center, and I sat in the stern. I had fastened the end of the anchor

rope to a piece of light driftwood, which lay in front of me. I had but to throw it out and we should be free. There was apparently no wind, the lake was absolutely calm, but after swinging around when I dropped the anchor, the canoe remained about stationary, bow pointing to the shore.

The sun went down behind the mountains and with its going we saw numbers of elk, deer, and some moose come out to the shore of the lake to drink and frisk about and browse upon the tender shoots of red willow and other favorite varieties of brush. None of these animals, nor the antelope, care for grass, and rarely eat it except in early spring before the brush leaves out. The favorite food of the antelope is the short, sweet sage of the plains.

A kit fox was the first of the night prowlers to make his appearance at the meat pile. He came trotting boldly down the sandy slope and, with not even a look around, began to tear strips of meat and fat from a side of ribs. Then came two coyotes, and the little fox snarled and growled at them as he backed away and nervously circled about, waiting for another chance at the food. The coyotes were not so bold in their feeding as the fox had been; they would tear off a strip of meat and spring back

from the pile and look all around while they gorged it in such a hurry that they more than once seemed to be on the point of choking to death. They constantly watched the shore-line in both directions, and the grass- and brush-fringed edge of the slope; never once, so far as we could make out, turning their attention to us.

Presently from somewhere out on the flat there came to us the long, mournful howl of a wolf, and both coyotes ran as fast as they could go to the top of the bank and looked out, several times rearing up on their hind legs in order to see farther. They soon came trotting back to feed, and had no more than set their teeth into the meat than the wolf howled again, this time quite near, and away they went along the shore toward the distant timber of the eastern ridge of the valley, and we soon lost sight of them in the gathering night.

Again the wolf howled, and this time he was answered by a dozen of his kind out upon the flat and back in the timber, some of them so far away that we could barely hear them.

'Their chief calls them; they are answering him; they will soon be here,' said No Runner.

He was right: within ten minutes a dozen and more of the big gray prowlers came trotting down from the flat across the sand to the meat, led by a

very large old male whose fur was almost white. Snarling and growling at one another, they fell upon that meat pile and began to drag it apart, and where two or three of them set their teeth into one piece, they fought among themselves for it. The white leader seized a set of ribs that had been all the weight No Runner and I together could carry, and, head up, made off along the shore with it for forty or fifty yards, and then began his feast.

'This must end, or there will soon be no meat left for Head-Crusher!' No Runner hissed back to us.

'He may be coming. How can we frighten them away without frightening him, too?' I asked.

For reply No Runner stood up and spread wide his blanket wrap with a sudden flap, and much quicker than I can tell it those wolves were gone! They went so fast that we could hear the hiss of the sand and gravel spurned into the air by their feet, the larger pieces plopping into the lake like so much hail. We had to strangle our laughs, but in spite of her efforts, Star Woman tee-heed outright, and we could hear the echo of it in the timbered slope at the outlet of the lake.

After the wolves left, the twilight soon faded into black night, but we made no move; we knew that it would not be long until the full moon would be rising over the top of the great ridge to the east,

to give us plenty of light. Far out on the lake a couple of loons called to one another in their high-keyed, falsetto, shivering laughs. Owls hooted in the timber. Out on the flat the wolves took heart and began howling for another advance upon our meat pile. There was a sudden heavy splash — a following gurgling noise, in the water close on our left.

Star Woman gave a little squeal of fear: 'The Under-Water People!' she gasped.

'Maybe so! Pray, and take courage!' No Runner told her.

'It was a big fish! Nothing but a big fish! There is nothing for us to fear,' I said. But all the same I shivered. The black night, the black, deep water we floated upon, the howling of wolves and hooting of owls, fresh and distant splashings in the lake, and the possibility of a disastrous encounter with old Head-Crusher — all these were anything but soothing to the nerves. I began to wish that we were safe back in our lodge, sitting before a good blaze in the fireplace.

It seemed a very long time before the skyline above the ridge took on a silvery tinge. Slowly the silver changed to a golden hue, brighter and brighter, and then the big moon appeared, and we could see far up and down the shore almost as well

as in the daytime. The little kit fox was gorging himself at the meat pile, and suddenly turned tail and ran away, and again the old white wolf appeared at the edge of the flat and was joined by his gang. They crowded close on either side of him, and behind, and looked out at us, and down at the meat pile, and several of them backed away out of our sight. The old leader stood his ground. Perhaps he said to them: 'Don't be cowards; there is nothing to fear; that which you see out on the lake is a small island, that and nothing more. Come! Follow me to the feast!'

Anyhow, that is what No Runner afterward said he told his followers. At least he himself took courage and advanced down the sloping beach, and they trailed after him. I looked forward at my almost-brother, expecting him to rise and again flap his blanket at them. But he was not looking at them: he was staring off to the left of them. I looked in that direction and lo! there was old Head-Crusher, coming slowly along the shore!

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEATH OF HEAD-CRUSHER

The wolves saw the bear at the same time that we did, and paused in their descent upon the meat pile and stared at him. During my year on the plains I had seen some big grizzlies, but this one far exceeded any of them in size. He was a monstrous animal, his body as long as that of a buffalo, and far bigger, his head fully as large as that of a buffalo bull. His new summer coat of hair, very long above the shoulders, had a shimmering, silvery tinge.

He stopped and sat straight up on his haunches, holding his immense forefeet drooping out in front of his body, and for a moment towered there, a mountain of flesh and fur. He sniffed the air with his keen nose, gave a sudden and loud snort, and resumed his approach to the meat pile.

The wolves backed away as he advanced, and finally lined up at the edge of the beach and watched him hungrily as he came to the meat, sniffed it here and there and then, with another tremendous snort, placed his forepaws upon a ham and tore a huge mouthful from it, chewing and

gulping it down with loud sucking smacks just as a hog devours its food.

The canoe was bow on to the bear; it would be impossible for me to shoot without at least powder-burning and deafening Star Woman.

I leaned forward and whispered: 'Tell No Runner not to shoot until I move the canoe, and then say, Shoot!'

Very cautiously and noiselessly I dropped overboard the float to which the anchor rope was tied, then slipped my paddle into the water, made one sweep and noiselessly withdrew it, laid it down and took up my rifle. Slowly the canoe swung around broadside to the shore, and I saw my companions raise their weapons and level them as I leveled mine and took careful aim at the bear.

'Shoot!' I cried, and before the word was out of my mouth, knew that I had given the word too late. Just as I started to say it, the bear began to move around to a position that would bring him head toward us. As I said the word I pulled trigger and so did No Runner. The canoe was swinging around as well as the bear, but, anyhow, when our rifles boomed and spat fire, we knew that we had made a hit, difficult as the shot had been. Yes, we knew that one of our balls, or both, had struck the bear, for he let out a hoarse roar of pain and anger,

and through the haze of powder smoke we saw him whirl around and bite at his left ham, and then in two jumps he splashed into the water and took after us.

'Paddle! Almost-brother, paddle! You, almost-sister, throw off the brush and then paddle, too!' I cried, and dropped my gun and began wielding my paddle with all my strength. I thought that I should never get the canoe started; much of the brush which we had put aboard drooped into the water and impeded its movement. Star Woman laid down her rifle and tore at it, tossing off branch by branch the load between her and me, and then turned and began to get rid of the rest of it.

I looked shoreward and saw the bear swimming straight toward us, coming so fast that his head and part of his neck rose clear from the water; he was making more than twice the progress that we were!

'Paddle! Paddle hard!' I shouted, and fairly tore at the water with my blade.

No Runner did the same, after one backward look at the bear. Star Woman cast off the last of the brush and dug her paddle into the water. Again I looked back: the bear was not thirty yards from us, and was coming faster than we could possibly urge our heavy craft through the water.

'We can't get away from him! Be ready to dive when he strikes the canoe!' I cried.

'I did not fire my gun! I will shoot him!' said Star Woman.

'No! No! Hand me your gun!' I told her.

'Pass it to me, I command you!' No Runner shouted.

'Neither of you shall have it! I shall shoot the bear!' she snapped at us, as she dropped her paddle and took up the weapon.

I saw that there was no time to argue with her. I had little hope that she would kill the bear, now almost up to us, and I did not want to chance her shooting me: with three or four sweeps of the paddle I brought the canoe around broadside to the fast-approaching bear and prepared to jump. I saw No Runner drop his paddle and throw off his blanket. The girl turned and raised her rifle to her shoulder, aimed it at the bear, continued to aim it as that terrible, open-mouthed head surged nearer and nearer, until it was no more than four feet from us, and in the awful suspense and excitement of that moment uppermost in my mind was wonder at her expression of confidence in herself. She fired, straight into the mouth of the bear, and his head instantly sank, his foam-churning forepaws instantly drooped; but his huge body surged on

and struck the canoe with a shock that all but spilled us into the lake.

We righted it before much water could pour in and stared at the bubbles rising and breaking close alongside, and then at one another! We could hardly believe our eyes: Star Woman had actually killed old Head-Crusher, had killed him as though he had been struck by lightning! His body was sinking down, down, down to rest upon the bottom of the lake!

'He is dead! Head-Crusher is dead! Brave, brave is Star Woman, my sister, Star Woman!' No Runner cried, and then raised the victory song.

He sang it alone. Star Woman laid down her gun, dropping it right into the water sloshing about in the canoe, and covered her eyes with her hands and cried!

'Why do you cry? Sing! Be happy!' I said to her.

'I cry because I am happy! Oh, so happy! Almost I cannot believe that I have killed Head-Crusher!' she answered, and laughed wildly, hysterically.

'But you have killed him! You are a brave — a wonderful girl!' I told her.

'Ik-at-os-ah-ki!' cried No Runner, ending his song. That is very difficult to translate. As nearly

as I can express it, the meaning is 'very much of the sun woman.'

I took up my paddle and began turning the canoe toward the outlet and camp.

'But the bear! Old Head-Crusher! My bear! I want him!' Star Woman cried.

'Of course you do, and you shall have him; but not now. To-morrow, maybe the day after, he will swell full of air and rise to the surface of the water, and then we will drag him ashore and skin him,' No Runner told her.

'It may be that we can get him in the morning,' I said, but did not explain a plan that had come into my mind.

We paddled to the shore, drew the canoe well out upon the sand, went to our lodge. Star Woman raked off the ashes with which she had covered the fire, and laid fresh wood upon the live coals. We sat back upon our couches, glad of the cheerful blaze that sprang up, and began to talk about our exciting experience of the night.

'When I saw that old Head-Crusher coming after us, and knew that he could swim faster than we could paddle, I was terribly frightened,' said No Runner. 'I said to myself: "If I stay with the canoe, he will probably kill me, and if I dive, the Under-Water People will probably seize me. Which

of the two shall I chance?" Actually, I was still undecided when sister fired her gun, and the bear bumped into the canoe and sank!'

'How glad I am that I did not fire my gun at the bear when you two shot at him!' Star Woman cried. 'I had a good aim at him, and then he began to move around, and when you, almost-brother, cried out to us to shoot, why, I had lost my aim, and the powder smoke belching from your guns was so thick that I could not see through it to take fresh aim!'

'I can't understand how you managed to do what you did,' I told her. 'Weren't you terribly frightened when you saw the bear coming nearer and nearer to us?'

'I was at first,' she answered shortly, and gazed raptly, absently at the fire.

'And then?' I asked.

'Sister, are you going to sleep right there? Wake up! Tell us about it!' No Runner cried.

'Why, there isn't much to tell,' she answered, still as one in a dream. 'I saw that big, open mouth, and just knew I could shoot straight into it and kill that old Head-Crusher!'

No Runner and I stared at her.

'It was just by chance that she hit him! She couldn't do it again once in a million times!' I said to myself.

But No Runner had a different view of it: 'The gods gave you of their power! They guided your aim! Not uselessly did Talks-with-the-Buffalo make medicine for us, for you especially!' he told her.

'That must be the way of it! Oh, I see now that it was the gods who caused me to do what I did!' she cried.

'You have so much medicine that I am afraid to ask you to broil us some meat,' I told her, as I took up her water-soaked gun and began to clean it.

She laughed, oh, so happily, and went over to the meat pile and cut some generous slices and brought them to the fire.

'Actually, I have killed Head-Crusher!' she cried. 'Oh, how happy I am! When the medicine lodge is built, and all the warriors count their *coups* before it, I shall stand there with them and count my *coup* on Head-Crusher!'

We sat before the fire until late in the night, talking over and over our adventure with the bear. It was my opinion that the exceeding coldness of the lake water would prevent gases forming in his body, making it buoyant so that it would rise to the surface. I had a long file in our outfit and determined to put it into a hot fire and draw its temper, then bend it into a hook, and attach it to our rope

and drag the bottom of the lake for the body; there was a chance that the hook would catch in it, and we could then slowly raise it and drag it ashore.

'Don't spoil a good file; we need it for sharpening our knives,' said No Runner, when I had explained my plan to raise the bear.

'Bears are different from other animals in swelling after they are dead,' he went on. 'They swell up very quickly. I am sure that we shall find old Head-Crusher floating on the surface of the lake before to-morrow's sun goes down.'

At last we talked ourselves out, put some half-dry wood on the fire, and crawled into our beds and slept. When I awoke, the sun was shining upon the top of the lodge. No Runner was still sound asleep at my side, but Star Woman's couch, across the fireplace from us, was empty. I aroused No Runner and we ran to the river for our bath; it was a short one, for the water was piercingly cold. While we were dressing, we heard Star Woman calling us, and then she came running into the lodge all out of breath, her eyes shining with excitement.

'Come! Hurry! I have found my kill! He is floating close to the shore!' she gasped.

'Ha! What did I tell you? I knew that he would soon float! Aren't you glad that you didn't spoil

our file!' exclaimed No Runner, as we took up our rifles and followed the girl out of the lodge.

She led us up through the timber to the shore of the lake, and then along it almost to the meat pile, the remnants of it, rather, and, sure enough, there was the bear, a small portion of its swollen body protruding from the water like a hairy island. No Runner and I took off our moccasins and leggings, waded out and towed him until his huge body touched the sandy bottom, and farther than that we could not move him. We reached down and drew his head up, and stared at its immense size, and at the long, yellow fangs in the open jaws. We let it go and brought a forepaw into view: its claws were all of six inches in length!

Star Woman clapped her hands when she saw them, and cried out to us: 'Oh, how proud I shall be when I have them made into a necklace, and wear it!'

The removal of that great hide in the icy water was the most difficult skinning job that No Runner and I ever had. There was so much fat on the hide that we could not get good grips upon it, and our hands and our legs became so numb with cold that we had frequently to go ashore and warm ourselves in the sun. It was long past noon when we finished that part of the work, and drew the great hide

ashore and spread it out upon the sand. According to my rough measurements, it was eleven feet long and seven feet in width! And it was so heavy that we could not carry it; we rolled it together, flesh side out, and, with many a rest, dragged it down to the lodge.

Star Woman hurried to cook us some meat; we had eaten nothing since the previous evening, and were weak from hunger. As soon as the meal was finished, we resumed work on the big hide, stretching and lacing it in a frame of four stout poles, and then fleshing it with our knives. The removal of the tenacious fat was our hardest task; the sun was setting when we got the last of it off and leaned the clean hide in its frame against a tree to dry. When that was done, we were too tired to talk; we ate another hearty meal, and took to our couches and slept soundly through the night.

We were up at daylight the next morning, and after our bath and an admiring stand before the great hide, we debated what we had best do, while eating a lot of broiled meat. We were free now to begin our quest of the white beaver, but Star Woman argued that we should first take the bear hide down to camp, for we could not very well take it with us nor leave it where it was to dry.

'What do you intend to do with it?' I asked.

'I? Nothing!' she replied. 'I give you two my share of it!'

'Then it is all yours, Generous Raven, for I have no use for it,' No Runner told me. 'Truly, I believe that I have no right to a share of it: your ball it was, not mine, that struck him in the flank and made him come swimming out for our sister to kill.'

'I am glad to have the hide!' I told them. 'I shall have it tanned, and you and I, almost-brother, will use it for a bed-robe.'

'What!' he cried. 'Don't you know that bears are medicine animals — that we dare not use their hides?'

'I know nothing about it! Come! I listen!' I answered.

'You have but to look at the body of a bear,' he said, 'to see that it is very different from that of any other animal. It is shaped like that of man; it is a man-body, all except the head. Yes, almost-brother, bears are almost-men; they are men-animals, and they have powerful medicine, and they are our enemies. Haven't you ever noticed that our medicine men never mention the bear by his right name? No? Well, when they speak of him they call him sticky-mouth, or short-tail. They never have a bearskin in their lodges; they never enter a lodge that contains one, because if

they do, the bear's medicine will break their medicine.'

'How do your people know all this?' I asked him.

'How do we learn anything? By experience. By visions. Thus it was that our long-ago fathers learned all about these medicine animals!' he answered.

'Well, if the bear is such bad medicine, how do any of you dare use necklaces of the claws?' I asked.

'That is different. As we take the scalps of Sioux, Crows, and other enemies, and use them for decorations, so do we use the claws of the bears we kill. It was long ago proved that we cannot be harmed by wearing them,' he explained.

'We will take the hide down to camp and then make a real start after the white beaver,' I decided.

We carried to the canoe our bedding and what meat we had, then took the still green hide from its frame, carefully folded it and put it aboard, and went after our anchor rope. Having secured it, we turned about and went down the outlet, and down the lower lake toward the big camp. While No Runner and I paddled, Star Woman bored and gouged holes in the base of the foreclaws of old Head-Crusher, then strung them on a strand of

buckskin, about an inch apart, and proudly fastened the grim trophy around her neck.

'Just think what those claws have done!' she exclaimed, as she looked down upon them, strung across her bosom. 'They have torn into the heads of some of our people! They have also killed numbers of the animals of the plains and the forest; and dug out mice; and destroyed wasps' nests in old logs; and torn ant lodges apart! And they have left through many summers their marks upon long, winding trails in these high mountains and deep valleys; through many winters lain motionless in some dark cave in the cliffs! And now they lie harmless here upon my breast! They are mine! Mine! I killed old Head-Crusher!'

She laughed happily, and we laughed with her.

'Now, sister, now, almost-brother, now let us raise the victory song!' No Runner exclaimed, as we neared the big camp.

The two of them sang it as loudly as they could, and I joined in to the best of my ability. The heart-stirring chant of triumph rang off across the still water and echoed among the lodges, and men, women, and children came flocking to the shore to greet us, impatient to learn what brave deed we had done.

We ceased paddling, and as the canoe grated

upon the sand, No Runner cried out: 'Star Woman! Great is Star Woman! Great is Star Woman! She has killed, has killed our enemy, has killed Head-Crusher!'

Oh, how the people shouted when they heard that! We stepped ashore and they crowded around us, staring at the huge claws that the girl wore, and at the bulk of the folded hide that No Runner and I lifted from the canoe. They shouted her name over and over, called her a brave one, a girl-chief! an avenger of their dead! And in the midst of it all Mad Plume came forcing his way through the crowd, saw with his own eyes the proof of what the people were shouting, and raised his hands to the sky as he silently offered the gods a prayer of thanks. Having done that, he ran and clasped Star Woman to him, tears of pride and joy streaming down his cheeks as he kissed her, and then again he offered a prayer of thanks to the gods. Then came the girl's mother, her almost-mother, Grouse Woman, Eagle Woman, and embraced her, and led her homeward, No Runner and I following, and the crowd surging after us, singing, excitedly talking, imploring us to tell them how Star Woman had made her great *coup*. A hundred times we told them to wait; that they should know all in due time.

We dropped the hide at the doorway of our lodge, and then went on to Mad Plume's lodge, where already the chiefs and medicine men were entering to hear the account of the killing of the terrible bear. The lodge-skin pegs had been pulled, the lodge-skin raised high all around, so that a part, at least, of the great crowd could hear the story.

Room was made for us in the circle, and as soon as we were seated, Mad Plume said to Star Woman: 'Daughter, tell us all about it!'

'You, brother, you tell it for me!' she begged No Runner, and he eagerly began the tale and told it in every detail, our whole experience from the time when Head-Crusher had come nosing around our lodge. He gave a vivid description of the bear coming foaming through the water to attack us, and emphasized the girl's coolness and bravery as she refused to hand either of us her gun, and took careful aim and fired right into the huge, open mouth of the animal. He ended his tale, and again the great crowd shouted their praise of the girl.

Then, as old Talks-with-the-Buffalo raised his hands for silence, every one listened intently as he said: 'Powerful are the gods! They are good to us: they accept our sacrifices, they heed our prayers! In what this brave girl has done, I plainly see the sign that she is to become what her father wishes —

what we all want her to become — a warrior of our people! Let us smoke to the gods!'

Mad Plume had already filled a pipe. He passed it to Talks-with-the-Buffalo, and the old man lit it, blew smoke in the sacred directions, and offered up an appealing prayer of thanks. Then, as the pipe went the round of the circle, talk became general. In all, four pipes were smoked. The council was then dismissed and No Runner and I hurried to our lodge. Henri and Antoine had just returned from their trapping line, and we found them staring at the great hide which the women were lacing into a frame of stout lodge-poles.

'What an immense bear it was! And you killed it!' Antoine exclaimed.

'We did not! Star Woman killed it!' I told them, and they turned and stared at me, open-mouthed.

'Impossible! You jest!' Henri cried.

'It is the truth! Come! I shall tell you all about it!' said No Runner, and down we sat right there, and a crowd gathered around us and listened, too, while he repeated the tale of our great adventure.

'It was a narrow escape that you young ones had!' Henri said very gravely. 'It was by the merest chance that the girl's shot broke the bear's neck! Had the ball gone but the width of a finger

to the right, or left, old Head-Crusher would have tipped you out into the lake, and not one of you would ever have reached the shore alive! I felt all the time that I should not have let you go off up there by yourselves!'

'My friend, how foolish is your talk!' Antoine exclaimed. 'Now that they are safely here, and with this wonderful trophy, rejoice that you did let them go!'

Henri did not answer that, for Star Woman came tripping to us, happy and smiling, and crying: 'Brothers-in-law, just see what I have!'

Oh, how graceful, how beautiful she was as she stood there before us, bending slightly forward, and holding out from her breast the necklace of claws! Henri and Antoine duly admired them; exclaimed at their great size; told her that she was a brave girl. The crowd around us shouted her name again and again in praise. That was a very happy time for Star Woman, and for us, too.

CHAPTER IX

THREE-LEGS, THE WHITE BEAVER

On the following morning, soon after sunrise, we embarked upon our quest of the white beaver. In the evening, in Mad Plume's lodge, Talks-with-the-Buffalo, Old Sun, and the chief himself had made medicine for our safety and success, and Henri had given us a birch bottle full of what he declared we should find to be the best medicine of all, a quantity of carefully prepared beaver scent. This was the dried and pulverized scent-gland of a beaver, the castor, mixed with a little alcohol.

We were not long in paddling to the head of the lake and cordelling on up the river to the upper lake. There we hurriedly loaded our lodge into the canoe, and, pushing off, felt that we were really started upon great adventure. We hugged the west shore pretty closely, looking into the quaking-aspen groves and along every strip of sand for signs of game, and seeing plenty of them, but none of the animals themselves. After paddling about four miles, we came to a long, timbered point jutting out into the lake, and found at the end of it a fine stream of water putting in from the

mountains. We thought that Three-Legs, as we called the white beaver, might have taken refuge somewhere along this stream, so we landed, drew the canoe well out upon the sand, and set off up the stream on discovery.

We had gone no more than a couple of hundred yards when we found that the timber, cottonwoods and aspen, was only a small grove: we looked out from it upon a long, wide, high-grassed prairie sloping up to the foot of the pine- and spruce-clad mountain-sides. At the north end of it a band of a hundred or more buffalo was feeding. We did not disturb them as we moved on up through the willows and alders fringing the creek.

We found no signs of beaver, not even a single cutting, as we followed the creek up across the prairie and into the heavily timbered canyon between two mountains. It had no earth banks in which beavers could make their dens, and it was everywhere too swift for them to dam. However, we kept following up it, and at last, late in the afternoon, we arrived at timberline, and looked out upon the rock walls and talus slopes of the mountain-tops, and saw the head of the stream, a large, deep bank of snow at the upper end of the canyon.

A band of bighorn ewes and their young were grazing and playing on a rocky, sparsely grassed

slope up to our right; and across the canyon from them were seven large rams. One of these was standing watch; the others were lying down, several of them apparently fast asleep. We needed meat, and knew that we could kill a buffalo or an elk or deer, close to the lake shore, but as soon as we saw those rams, we wanted one of them, for, next to the buffalo, the meat of a fat bighorn is the best in all the length and breadth of the land; and, too, we had use for the skin and the horns of a ram.

Star Woman said that she wanted to stalk the game. She crept back into the timber to circle up to the left and endeavor to approach them from above. No Runner and I sat down and watched the band and the boulder-strewn slope above them. Time passed, a very long time, we thought. The lone watcher deliberately moved down the slope to the nearest one of the band, butted him and horned him to his feet, and himself lay down to rest. The new watcher climbed the slope a few yards and carefully scanned the whole of the slopes and walls above him, then turned and looked down into the canyon and along the edge of the timberline. He could not see us, for we were well concealed behind a dwarf pine.

More time passed. The watcher suddenly threw up his head and wheeled about, stamping the rocky

ground with his forefeet, and at that the others sprang to their feet and also stared at the heights above. They were a sight to thrill the heart of any hunter as they stood there so alert, their massively horned heads held high as they sniffed the air, seeking to learn the cause of the watcher's alarm.

'Sister is not far from them. She is trying my way of getting a shot at the smart ones. You keep your ears open, and watch!' No Runner whispered to me.

After a moment or two we faintly heard a noise as though a rock had been displaced somewhere beyond the rams. They flinched at the sound, several of them turned as if to run, and then looked back. Off to the left of them a wide stretch of talus was in plain view; no living thing could cross it without being seen by them. Again they flinched as they heard — and we too, but more faintly, of course — the tinkle of rock upon rock, somewhere at the far side of the talus slope. At that, two of the rams bounded off toward the head of the canyon, but, finding that the others were not following, they made but a few leaps, and turned and looked back.

The largest one of the band, whose horns had the appearance of big washtubs set at the sides of his head, now advanced several steps ahead of the

watcher who had given the alarm, and looked intently across the slope, now and then spitefully stamping his forefeet. Again there was the tinkle of displaced rock; the old ram just had to know what caused it. He began to advance across the slope, a few steps at a time, and all the others followed, gradually moving up nearer and nearer to him. In this manner they gradually approached the far side of the slope, and the hard rock reef bordering it. Then there was a sudden burst of smoke from the base of a juniper bush on its crest; a loud boom that crashed and echoed from wall to wall of the mountains. The old lead ram fell and went rolling down the slope, and the others turned and bounded off toward the head of the canyon.

Star Woman sprang up from behind the juniper, shouting and waving to us, and we answered and hurried up to meet her at her kill.

'That is the way to do it!' No Runner said. 'When you cannot sneak up to bighorns close enough for a good shot, just hide and make a little noise with the rock — just a little noise, and not often, and they will come to you!'

It was almost night when we arrived at the point with our loads of meat and the skin and horns of the ram. We hurried to cut some quaking aspens for lodge-poles, and soon had the little lodge up.

No Runner and I took no shame in gathering a lot of firewood, for Star Woman was different; she was not a lodge woman; like us, she was a hunter, and in time would become a warrior. While we gathered the wood and built the lodge-fire, she spread the beds, putting thick layers of brush under them, and then sliced some of the fat bighorn ribs and broiled them; and presently, very tired and very happy, we sat down to the feast. We turned in very early and were soon sound asleep. But before we slept, we twice heard the thunder of falling ice.

We were afloat very early the next morning, and undecided as to what course we should take. Across the lake from us, but some distance farther up, was a sandy-beached, rounding point of heavy cottonwoods, through which we knew a large stream put in, the drainage of a wide, long, heavily timbered valley sloping up for fifteen or twenty miles into the very heart of the range. We debated whether to cross over and explore this valley, or to keep on our course up the lake and visit it on our way out, and decided to go on up the lake, as the white beaver had been heading that way as long as we had kept him in view.

After paddling about three miles, we came to the high, perpendicularly walled point of rock jutting far out into the lake, and in the deep bay it formed

found another stream tumbling in from a narrow canyon between two very high mountains. We went ashore just below it, and set out to explore it, swift and rocky though it was. After crossing a flat of coarse, high bunch grass, we entered the canyon and were soon convinced that it was not a beaver stream; back we turned, got into the canoe and paddled out around the point. No Runner and Star Woman looked down into the water and shivered at its blackness, the opaque blackness of great depth.

'The Under-Water People have their lodges in the deepest water they can find; they must be camping right under us!' No Runner exclaimed.

'Don't name them! Don't look down again!' Star Woman told him. 'If you must think of them, of what may be away down there, at least pretend that you are not doing so!'

The lake was very narrow here. Across from us, and a short distance farther up, a similar rock-walled point jutted out from the base of a very steep and high red-rock mountain, rising steeply from the shore, which was the outer one of a spur of four or five that formed the divide between the timbered valley I have mentioned and the valley of the Inside Lakes. Straight across from us an almost submerged reef of rock of peculiar contour

extended out from the mountain. It was narrow, almost level, and enclosed a lakelet that was triangular in shape. I discovered a large bear walking along the reef, and called my companions' attention to it, and for the time they forgot all about the Under-Water People. Star Woman wanted to cross over and try to kill it, but No Runner and I were not minded to do that.

We now completely rounded the point, and I saw that we were still four or five miles from the head of the lake. On both sides of it the steep mountains, cut by deep canyons, rose to great height. Near the head of it was a small, rocky, timbered island. I wondered if any one had ever set foot upon it — if we were to be the first to do so! From the wide beach at the head of the lake the heavily timbered valley stretched up for miles to the crest of the range.

I proposed that we go straight on to the head of the lake and make camp. My companions again looked down into the black water and shivered.

Said No Runner, 'The lake is very wide out there and no doubt very, very deep.'

'I say that we keep on close to this shore!' my almost-sister cried, and I turned the canoe according to her desire, heading straight toward the mountain of which the rocky point was an extension.

This upper side of the point was not walled; it sloped gently down to the water, and supported little groves of black pine and meadows of luxuriant grasses and flowers. We aroused a number of elk, cows and calves, yearling and two-year bulls, that were resting near the beach, and they got lazily upon their feet and stared curiously at us as we glided past them. At the base of the point we turned up the lake again, passing a high cliff, and then a long slope of little prairies and groves of timber, and arrived at a sandy point, from the extreme end of which a fine little stream came rushing into the lake.

We landed, and followed the stream up through a small grove of cottonwoods to the mouth of a deep, narrow canyon, and came to a beautiful fall of twenty-five or thirty feet. The straight wall rock on each side of it could not be climbed, so we returned to the canoe and went on to the head of the lake.

A narrow, open divide in the timber showed us where the river entered the lake, and we made straight for it, passing the little island, and suddenly paddled into a belt of milky-colored water that extended far out into the lake, a striking contrast with the latter's blueness. It was the inflowing water of the river. But why was it milky? We

plunged our hands into it, and found that it was actually icy — very much colder than the great body of the lake water. We could well understand why it was so cold; it was the meltings of the great ice cliffs perched along the not distant summit of the range; but, try as we would, we could not account for its color, unless it were that, somewhere along its course, the river ran through a bed of white earth-paint.

'If that is the cause of the white water, and we can find the paint, we shall be rich!' No Runner exclaimed.

'Yes. We can get a beaver skin for every handful of it that we take to camp!' said Star Woman.

Of course, I wanted to know why white earth-paint was so valuable, and they explained that it was a medicine — a sacred color — and was far less plentiful than the equally sacred red earth-paint. The nearest deposit of it was far to the south, in the Snow Mountains, and it had been pretty well dug out.

Upon learning that, I became doubly eager to go on discovery up the valley to the summit of the range. I had a vision of our arrival in camp with a canoe-load of white earth and of our trading it for so many beaver skins that there was not lodge room for them!

We entered the mouth of the river and paddled up the stream as far as we could go — only a few hundred yards — and found that its banks and bars were covered with beaver tracks, and the tracks of bear, moose, otter, mink, cougar, lynx, fisher, marten, and wolverine. There were no beaver dens in the banks, and no attempt had been made to dam the stream, but all the signs along it indicated that there was a large colony of the animals somewhere near by.

We landed and followed up a sluggish streamlet putting into the river from the east, and soon came to a large beaver pond containing eight lodges. Just beyond it we could see another dam, and, making our way to it through a thick tangle of brush, we found that it backed up the water of a larger pond, containing thirteen beaver houses. From where we stood upon it, we could see three more dams, so we went on and explored the whole swamp, and found that in all it contained nine ponds of various sizes and a total of forty-seven lodges! Broad day though it was, numbers of beaver were swimming about, a sure sign that there had been no trappers there; that they had no fear of man. But was Three-Legs — the white beaver — one of the colony?

Said No Runner: 'It must be that Three-Legs is

living in one of these ponds! This way he came, and we know that he did not stop on any of the streams coming into the lake from the west; of course, he is here!'

'No doubt he is here, but how are we to know just where to set our traps for him?' I asked, as I looked down upon the hard-packed dam on which we stood, so hard that the beavers frequenting it left no trace of their passing other than a wet smear. And it was the same with their slides, and the trails along which they dragged their wood-cuttings to the ponds.

'Thus shall we find where he lives,' No Runner answered. 'Beavers as tame, as unsuspicious as these, do not wait for night to fall in order to begin their work; they leave their lodges some time before sundown and eat their evening meal of bark, and then begin work, raising and strengthening their dams, and cutting down tender-bark trees for their winter supply of food. Well, this evening we will watch the lower pond; if we do not see Three-Legs there, we will watch the next pond tomorrow night, and so on until we see him. Then, if we cannot shoot him, nor learn in which one of the lodges of that pond he lives, we will keep trapping there until we catch him.'

I thought that a good plan; so did Star Woman.

As quietly as we could we sneaked back through the brush to the canoe and returned to the lake. As it would not do for us to camp near the ponds, we decided to return to the last stream that we had explored. There we set up the lodge, well back from the sharp little point, and made it as comfortable as possible.

When all was done, and we had broiled and feasted upon some more of the delicious bighorn meat, Star Woman split the head of the ram and set one of its immense horns into the kettle to boil, so that she could easily pare it down to the shape she wanted. No Runner and I went out to the extreme edge of the point, where the stream tumbled into the lake, and sat down. Not a dozen feet from the shore the water had the intense blackness of great depth; our point was undoubtedly the edge of a cliff that dropped straight down to the very bottom of the lake. Out in the black water, along the edge of the somewhat milky-colored stream running into it, we could now and then catch the silvery gleam of fish that were feeding upon various flies and insects brought in by the current. While we were watching them, a small fish broke water, and after came a huge trout that lunged out its whole length above the surface and fell back with a mighty splash.

'Oh! Oh! If I only had a fish-hook! How I would like to catch that big spotted fish, or one like it!' I cried.

'You shall have a fish-catching instrument! I will make one for you!' said No Runner.

I stared at him, then laughed, for I thought that he was joking.

'I mean it! You shall have your wish!' he exclaimed. 'Long ago, a man of the River People lived with us. When I was a little boy, I saw him catch fish, saw how he caught them with a bone instrument. I will make one like it. Come, let us return to the lodge.'

We found Star Woman paring down the boiled horn as though it was so much clay. In a very short time she fashioned it into a large and beautifully shaped spoon or ladle, and then did the same with the other horn. After they were thoroughly dried, she scraped and polished them. They were very useful additions to our outfit of cooking utensils.

No Runner split a leg-bone of the bighorn, and from one of the pieces, with knife and coarse sandstone, fashioned the catching instrument. It was about four inches long, sharp at one end, barbed at the other, and about half an inch wide in the middle. There was a crease around it a third of the

length from the center toward the smooth, sharp end. This done, he got some buffalo sinew from Star Woman, shredded it, and twisted the shreds into a long, slender, but very strong cord, half-hitched one end of it around the crease in the bone, impaled a strip of meat upon the barbed end of it, and declared that his work was done.

'Well, and how can a fish be caught with it?' I asked. 'When a fish seizes the meat, and I pull, the instrument will come right out of its mouth.'

'This is the way it works,' he explained. 'First, the fish must be given plenty of time to swallow the bait — to get it well down in its throat. Then you give a quick, hard pull. Being fastened to the cord as it is, a little way this side of its center, the bone will not come straight out from the fish's throat; it will slant, the sharp point will pierce one side of the throat, the barbed end will press against the other side of the throat, and the harder you pull, the more firmly the sharp end will be embedded ——'

'Enough! I understand! Come on, let's try it!' I cried.

We all hurried out to the canoe and pushed off, and I paddled it to the exact spot where the big trout had leaped. There I began lowering the baited bone; a big trout came up from the depths and seized it before it had sunk five feet. I paid

out all the length of the cord as the trout slowly swam away, and then gave a quick yank, and in turn was yanked so hard that I came near overturning the canoe. Star Woman and No Runner cried out to me to be careful. I yanked, and the fish yanked; the cord cut into my hands. The canoe was sucked into the current of the stream, and it shot us out across the deep water. Then the fish began to weaken; at last I got it up alongside, seized it by the gills and again all but overturned the canoe as I lifted and slid it aboard, a trout of all of thirty pounds weight! My companions cried out at its great size. I let go of it and it nearly went out over the side the first flop it made. No Runner gave it a blow on the head with his paddle and it quivered and gave a gasp or two, and was dead.

'Oh, what fun that was!' Star Woman exclaimed, as we went ashore with our catch.

'We have more fish than we can eat!' said No Runner.

It was time for us to begin our watch for Three-Legs. We went to the lodge with the fish, took up our weapons, and were soon paddling up the lake. The sun was low when we went ashore and made our way through the brush to the first one of the beaver dams. It was about seven feet in height. We stepped cautiously up on the interlocked tree-

cuttings and branches protruding from the solidly packed mud earth in which they were embedded, and looked out across the pond.

Almost we cried out in surprise as we crouched back: Three-Legs was sitting up on top of a beaver lodge at the far end of the pond!

CHAPTER X

COLD-MAKER'S GOATS

'THE white one! Three-Legs! Do you think he saw us?' Star Woman whispered.

'No! He was looking the other way,' No Runner answered her.

'He is too far off; we mustn't risk shooting at him at that distance!' I said. It would have been too long a shot: all of a hundred and fifty yards.

'Let us rise up very cautiously and have another look at him,' No Runner proposed.

We did so, exposing the tops of our heads so slowly that neither Three-Legs nor four or five beavers much nearer even looked our way. Three-Legs was still sitting straight up, looking toward the head of the pond. He got down on all fours — I suppose I should say all threes — turned about, and sat up again, looking our way, and jerking his head up and down as he sniffed the air. As he was doing that, another beaver came up on the rounded roof of the lodge from behind, and lunged at him, knocking him over. For a moment they fought fiercely, and then together rolled off into the water with a splash.

The instant the fight began, beavers in all parts of the pond started swimming toward the lodge as fast as they could go, and when the combatants tumbled into the water and sank, they all dived. Then, suddenly, Three-Legs bobbed up in the very center of the pond. So did his enemy, and again they fought, splashing the water, slapping it loudly with their broad tails, and as they sank, the other inhabitants of the pond began to bob up in the vicinity of the bubbling, foaming water that marked the place where they had gone down. Then close out in front of us the two erupted in a shower of high-flung spray, and dashed about this way and that way, so rapidly that we could no more than follow them with our eyes. Three-Legs was doing his best to elude his pursuer, a very large beaver, the chief, no doubt, of the pond, and was doing very well. The loss of his forefoot did not affect his ability in the water, as in swimming the beaver does not use his forelegs: he simply straightens them back against his body, which he propels with his large and powerful webbed hindfeet.

The chase of the white one was now on in grim earnest, but we perceived that only a part of the inhabitants of the pond were in it; the others, mothers with their young, yearlings, and some that appeared to be two-year-olds, were assembling

upon the tops of the lodges, where they sat up on their haunches and eagerly watched the fracas. Pursued and pursuers were gone from in front of us almost as quickly as they had appeared. They came up again, splashing and slapping the water, near the right edge of the pond, and went down and reappeared out in the center, and the next time in between the lodges. Now here, now there, the water boiled and heaved in bursting spray, clear at first, but soon becoming black with the stirred-up mud and slime of the bottom. The spectators on top of the lodges could not turn fast enough to keep track of the chase; they would no sooner look at an upheaval in one place than it would suddenly cease there and break out somewhere else. We nearly laughed out loud at the funny way in which they were constantly and awkwardly changing their positions. The beaver certainly is an awkward waddler when upon the land, but of exquisite grace and lightning-like activity in the water.

The splashing in among the lodges ceased after a few minutes, and Three-Legs' pursuers came to the surface and rapidly swam about in all directions. It was getting dusk; we could barely see their heads, but sharp furrows that they cut in the roiled water heaved into ever-widening silvery streaks behind them.

Said No Runner: 'They have lost Three-Legs!'

'Perhaps they have killed him!' Star Woman murmured.

Back of the lodges was the wide, dark bulk of the dam which confined the waters of the second pond. No Runner pointed to it, and hissed: 'There he is! There he is, climbing the dam!'

Yes, there he was, waddling up its steep slope as fast as he could go. We could plainly see him, his white body, contrasting sharply as it did with the earth and mud-stained sticks of the rise. He waddled up to the top of it and dived off out of sight. A moment later, several of his pursuers sat up there in his place; we had not been able to see them as they climbed the dam, but as soon as they gained the top, their outlines were sharp enough against the rosy light of the dying day. They remained there as long as we could make out their forms.

It was time for us to go. We sneaked away from the dam, and stumbled our way through the thick brush to the canoe, scrambled into it and dropped down the river. We heard loud splashings here and there as we put out upon the lake, but it was so dark that we could not see what made them.

'I am afraid!' said Star Woman. 'Why should I deny what is in my heart? I am afraid! That we

hear is surely the splashings of the Under-Water People!'

'To me the splashings sound like the playing of otters; and that sloshing there along the shore is only the wading of a moose or elk across the shallows,' I said.

'Under-Water People can wade, too!' she murmured.

'Not with four feet; they have but two. Listen to the time of the splashings: one — two — three — four! One — two — three — four! Of course it is one of the deer kind wading there!' I told her.

She did not answer that. No Runner had nothing to say. They both began paddling with all their strength, and I did little but steer. For all my brave words, I, too, had an intermittent feeling of fear. Of what, it was impossible to define. The black, cold, and deep water in which the stars were faintly reflected, the near and far uncanny splashings, the distant, organ-like reverberations of many waterfalls, the strange, faint stir of night life in the deep forests lining the shore — these were enough to give any youth the shivers!

We landed upon our point, drew the canoe well out upon the sand, and hurried to the lodge and quickly built a fire. It blazed up, and we all gave

a sigh of relief; we dropped back upon our couches, looked at one another and smiled.

'We have seen something this evening!' I said.

'Yes. And one thing is sure: we are going to have a hard task. We may never succeed in trapping Three-Legs,' said Star Woman.

'Right you are, little sister!' No Runner exclaimed. 'Now, this is how I see it,' he continued. 'Because he is different, because he is white, all the other beavers hate him; he is an outcast. I do not say that the female beavers hate him. This is the season when the beavers marry. It is likely that some young female, or a widow, would marry Three-Legs, would be glad to have him — would be proud of his whiteness; but from what we have seen to-night, it is certain that, wherever he goes, the males drive him away before he can even begin his love-making. He is a wanderer. Watch as we may, I do not believe that we shall see him again in this colony. Nor do I believe that we shall ever succeed in trapping him unless he marries and builds a home of his own somewhere. Even if he does that, we may not get him; this is a big country; we may hunt for him all summer and never find his home!'

'No doubt you are right; we may never get him. Anyhow, we want fur. I propose that we begin

trapping right away; let us set our traps in the lower pond to-morrow,' I said.

'Yes, we will do that; we can trap there while we make further search for him,' No Runner agreed.

On the following morning we went to the lower pond and set our sixteen traps, some at the foot of slides, others here and there along the shore. All were set in about four inches of water, and those that were not at slides were baited with castor. To do that, we dipped the end of a twig in the powerful scent and stuck it up near the trap. Attracted by the odor, a beaver would swim to it, pause to sniff it, and the jaws of the trap would snap shut upon whichever one of his hind feet touched the pan. The ring of every trap-chain was slipped over a long pole, firmly stuck into the bank and extending out into deep water, and the branches of the poles were lopped off so that the ring would easily slide out past the slight protuberances that were left, but not back over them. A cross-stick fastened near the end of the pole checked the ring at that point. When a trap was sprung upon a beaver's foot, the animal began a desperate struggle to free himself from it. If by any chance he could reach the land with it, he could generally gnaw himself free, if caught by a

forefoot, and, sometimes, twist himself free from a hindfoot. However, nine times out of ten the panic-stricken animal would dive for deep water, the trap-ring would slide out along the pole to the cross-stick and remain there, and the consequence was that the weight of the trap would soon cause the quickly tiring beaver to drown.

We had all of the traps set and were back in our lodge by noon. Then, toward evening, we returned to the ponds and watched the second one, and the first one, too, until dusk. Three-Legs did not appear. Twice during our watch a sudden commotion in the water drew our attention to the lower pond, and each time we saw a trapped beaver struggling to get free.

On our way back to the canoe, we suddenly got the strong odor of a bear, and then, close to our left in the thick brush, the animal snorted at us. We could not see him in the darkness of the timber; we dared not run; we made the rest of the way to the canoe with many a shiver of fear, and as soon as we were safely off, we vowed never again to remain at the ponds until dusk.

The following day was a busy one for us: we skinned eleven beavers that we took from the traps, and carefully fleshed the hides and stretched them to dry in willow hoop frames. In the evening

we watched the third and fourth of the ponds, and again saw nothing of Three-Legs. And thus two weeks and more passed and our pile of beaver pelts mounted higher and higher. But we saw no more of Three-Legs, and were convinced that he had gone on up the river.

We subsisted during this time almost entirely upon beaver meat and beaver tails, and an occasional trout that I caught, as we were too busy to hunt. We finally tired of that diet. We had caught nearly all of the beavers in the ponds. It was time for us to move, and after some talk we decided upon a trip up the river on discovery. We would continue our search for Three-Legs, and, if possible, visit the great ice cliffs and from the summit of the range see what lay to the west of it. So, one fine morning, we took up our traps — only two beavers were in them — and during the day moved the lodge and all our hides and things to the little island near the head of the lake; there they were certain to be safe from depredations during our absence.

We left the island very early on the following morning, paddled up the river as far as we could go, hid the canoe, and shouldered our packs and weapons. We each carried an extra blanket and two traps, and Star Woman her pouch of sewing

tools and sinew. I have seen some bad growths of brush in my time, but none worse than we encountered after leaving the canoe; in many places we simply had to fight our way through it. It lashed and scratched our faces and hands; tripped us and threw us headlong; and at times we almost despaired of making further progress in it. Away up on the mountain-sides we could see open timber; grassy parks; well-defined game trails crossing the broad bands of talus under the cliffs; along there would be an easy way for us to make the summit of the range. But we could not leave the river: we had to examine its every bar and bank for signs of Three-Legs.

On and on we tore our way through the brush, finding occasional signs of mink and of otter along the shore, but none of beaver. This part of the valley seemed to be avoided by all the different kinds of game; now and then we saw the footprints of a bear or a moose, and that was all. From early morning until near sundown, we followed that river and found not one track — not one cutting of beaver. We had brought no meat with us, had seen nothing to kill, and so made a supperless camp.

We built a fire and lay around it, so tired that it was considerable of an effort for any of us to move

and lay fresh sticks upon it from time to time. We were too tired to talk. No Runner said that he believed the beavers did not live along it on account of the icy coldness of its waters. Neither my almost-sister nor I made any comment upon that. After replenishing the fire a few times, Star Woman rolled into her blanket and slept, and No Runner and I were not long in following her example. We heard a tremendous crash of falling ice, somewhere to the west, and a moment or two later were sound asleep.

We awoke before daylight, chilled with the cold of that high altitude and very, very hungry. As soon as there was sufficient light to enable us to travel, we made up our packs and went on up the river, resuming our fight with the brush, now heavily coated with frosted dew. We had not gone far, however, when we emerged from the brush and timber and looked out upon a narrow lakelet set in a deep cleft in the mountains. On its right the mountain was a series of black rock cliffs, supporting here and there growths of juniper brush and stunted and twisted pines. The mountain on the other side was more sloping, and rose to greater height, and its whole north slope, as well as that of the mountain next it, was one great mass of ice. Beyond the lake was a slight rise of rock, and be-

yond it nothing but blue sky; that rise and the heights on either side of us formed the crest of the range.

But of far more importance to us than the wonderful view was a band of a dozen and more white-coated, black-horned animals that were feeding and playing at the shore of the lake. They had much the shape of buffalo: extremely high withers, low hindquarters, short necks; and like the buffalo, they had long beards, and long fluffy hair extending down the forelegs to the knees.

'Ha! Ai-po-muk-e-kin-iks![1] Come! We shall soon have meat!' No Runner said to us, and began walking toward the band.

'Be careful! Get down! Let us sneak toward them!' I told him.

'Not necessary! They are fools!' he answered, and kept on, Star Woman and I closely following him.

He was right. It was not necessary to stalk the animals. As we approached the band, several of them looked at us, gave us a passing glance, as it were, and resumed their feeding and playing. We advanced until we were no more than fifty yards from them and could plainly see their black eyes, and then No Runner shot at one of them and he

[1] White bigheads. The Rocky Mountain goat.

dropped in his tracks. The rest merely looked at us, at the fallen one, and at us again, and I laughed out loud and broke my aim. I just couldn't help laughing, for the faces of the animals had a really human expression of extreme foolishness, of silliness! Star Woman, however, fired at one of them; he flinched, and began staggering away, and then, at last, I recovered my aim and made a clean kill. As we advanced toward them, the survivors broke into a trot and went off along the shore, and then, with many pauses and backward silly stares, they went up along the cliffs of the black mountain.

All three of our kills were young males; two-year-olds, we thought. We examined them with much interest before getting out our knives. At the base of their slender, scimitar-shaped horns were black, warty glands that gave off a strong odor of musk. Their coats of long, coarse hair had an undergrowth of fine, thick wool.

Said No Runner: 'I am glad! This is a happy day. Much have I heard about these animals, and now I have killed one of them!'

'And our almost-brother and I have each killed one of them; truly, it is a happy day!' said Star Woman.

We began skinning the animals, and I asked No Runner to tell me what he knew about them.

'You shall hear what our wise ones say about them,' he answered. 'It is believed that Cold-Maker himself made the first pair of them and turned them out somewhere in these north mountains to live and breed their kind. See, he made their coats so thick that they cannot feel the cold of winter. Nor can they bear the heat of summer; so it is that they live only in the high mountains; and the colder it is, and the deeper the snow falls, the higher they go; for the snow cannot lie on the faces of the cliffs, and it is there that they get their winter food, the moss that grows upon the rocks. They are very plentiful all along this Back-Bone-of-the-World as far north as any of our people have gone, but they are never found anywhere south of the head of Point-of-Rocks River. We do not know why that is; it is thought that Cold-Maker does not allow them to go farther south.'

'Well, when Cold-Maker was making them, he forgot one thing: he forgot to give them wisdom,' said Star Woman.

'That is true. Why, this band of them seemed to have no fear of us. I cannot understand that!' he said.

'They do not fear us because they have had no experience with man,' I told them. 'No doubt we are the first people ever to hunt here.'

'But they were not even alarmed by the discharge of our guns,' said Star Woman.

'Because the sound of them was not different from that of falling ice,' I said.

We built a fire and cooked some of the goat meat. It had a slightly musky odor and flavor, but was quite palatable; we ate a hearty meal of it.

The sun was now well up in the cloudless sky, but in spite of it we felt chilly; the slight wind that was coming down across the great ice-field felt like a winter wind. I proposed that we go up on the ice, follow it to the summit, and look down upon the west side of the range.

'Why climb so high when we can see the other side by going to the end of this low place beyond the lake?' No Runner asked.

'Because I would like to go up on that ice. To me it is something wonderful. I want to see all of it that I can,' I answered.

'I, too, want to climb it!' Star Woman told him.

'Very well, come on,' he agreed, and we started.

'You are right. These great ice masses are wonderful; they are Cold-Maker's medicine leavings,' he said, as we made our way up across a long slope of talus. 'He and Sun are always fighting. He comes down from the Far North, bringing with him his snowstorms and terrible cold winds, and day by

day drives Sun away to the South. He does the best that he can, but always he loses strength; his storms become more and more feeble, his power for cold-making weakens, and then Sun turns and slowly but steadily drives him back whence he came, melting his snows, warming the earth, and causing the grass to grow again. But in the very first of their battling, Cold-Maker made strong medicine. Here and there along these mountains, along this Back-Bone-of-the-World, he deposited great thicknesses of ice, and when he had made them he said to Sun: "Just at this time you are the stronger; you drive me back; but I leave these thick ice places along my trail as a sign that I shall come again. Unless you can turn them into water and make them disappear, you can never conquer me!"'

'"Ha! If that is all I have to do then you shall soon be no more!" Sun cried, and sent his heat down upon the ice places with all his strength. Water began to stream from them; rivers of water poured from them. Sun laughed: "This is easy. I shall soon melt them," he said. But he failed to do it, and when he had used up all his heat, and had melted only a small part of them, back came Cold-Maker and drove him South, and made fresh ice in place of that that had been melted. And so it has

gone on, this battle between the two, and so it will go on. There, almost-brother, you now know all about these ice places!'

'Not all! You forgot to tell him about Wind-Maker!' Star Woman reminded him.

'Oh, yes! Wind-Maker!' he exclaimed. 'Wind-Maker is Cold-Maker's helper,' he explained. 'He is a very large animal, something like a moose, and has enormous ears. He works his ears and thus causes the wind to blow, very softly, or very hard, just as he pleases. Well, when Cold-Maker is driven North by Sun, he leaves Wind-Maker here in these mountains, to do all that he can against Sun during the summer. He, too, is tired and weak, but now and then, even when Sun is strongest, he manages to ear-fan a terrible wind, so cold that for the time it prevents the ice melting. Thus he is of great help to Cold-Maker.'

'Let us hope that he will not work his ears to-day!' I said very fervently, and my companions never once doubted that their beliefs were not also mine. But try as I would, I could find no reason for the presence of those great ice masses on the mountain heights. I had never even heard of glaciers. How was I to know that these were the last, dwindling remnants of the great ice-cap of the glacial period?

A walk of about an hour brought us to the central part of the face of the great ice-sheet, all of five miles long, a mile and more in width, and of great thickness — two thousand feet, perhaps. Here the main fork of the river issued from a green, glittering, deep cavern in the ice, a stream that was almost as white as milk. We peered into the cavern, and saw that we could go into it only a little way.

'Ha! The white earth-paint bed is away back in there!' No Runner exclaimed. And so vanished our hope of sudden riches. I did not for a moment suspect that that whiteness was caused by the steady, slow grinding of the rock by the live and moving glacier!

Out from the face of the great ice-sheet the rocky slope was strewn with melting blocks that had fallen from it. Off to the east of the stream cavern we found a place where we could climb up onto the ice and soon made the ascent. The surface of the long, wide, steeply rising slope was not smooth ice; it was coarse-grained snow, apparently, of a yellowish tinge, and was strewn with dust and fine rock particles brought down by the winds from the bare peaks on either side of the field. We began the long, steep climb to the summit and soon found ourselves in a network of crevasses in the ice, narrow, green, glittering, of unfathomable depth.

We could not help shivering as we looked down into them; we stepped along more cautiously; in places crawled upon hands and knees, for we well knew that to slip into one of them would be certain death to us.

'You see what he has done, this old Cold-Maker,' said No Runner. 'He is so jealous of his ice leavings, so afraid enemy gods may come upon the ice and make medicine against him, that he has made these deep holes to trap them!'

More than once on our way up, I wished that we had never attempted the climb; there were places where we had to jump across the yawning cracks, and more than once we made the leap when by no means certain that we could reach the other side. At last, however, we arrived at the upper edge of the ice, then climbed a steep, rough rise of rock and stood upon the very crest of the range. West and north and south as far as we could see — a hundred miles and more — was one great wilderness of mountains and dark forest, steep mountains, all but a few of them forest-clad to their very summits. Deep down between them streams and lakelets gleamed, fringed with the light green of cottonwoods and willows. Nowhere could we see a stretch of plain; not even a grassy park.

Long we stood there looking off upon the vast

forest. Star Woman turned her back to it and involuntarily shivered.

'Just think how terrible it would be if we had to live there!' she exclaimed. 'To live always in the darkness under the pine trees! Never to look off upon the beautiful, sunny plains stretching away — away to the very edge of the world! Never to see the great herds of buffalo and antelope, nor taste their rich flesh! To travel always in fear of enemies concealed in the near-by brush! Now that I have seen this other-side country, I do not wonder that its peoples are poor. I do not blame them for stealing out upon our plains to hunt. We have more country, more game than we need. I think that we should allow them to live upon our side of the mountains and kill all they want of our game!'

'Ha! And there would be countless children to grow up and take our plains from us! Come! Let us go back! That endless forest off there makes me low-hearted!' No Runner exclaimed.

Down we went, threading our way between the crevasses and vowing never again to step upon one of Cold-Maker's ice-fields once we were clear of this one. I was in the lead as we neared the lower edge of the sheet. Suddenly the apparently solid snow gave way beneath my feet, and with a shriek of fear I shot down into a narrow crevasse that it had lightly bridged.

CHAPTER XI

STAR WOMAN TO THE RESCUE

No Runner, closely following, broke through with me. Down, down we went into the crevasse, both of us certain that we were going to our death in the heart of the great ice-mass. But at the top, where we broke through, the crevasse had been only four or five feet in width; it narrowed with depth, and at about thirty feet we wedged in between the walls and stuck fast.

For a moment neither of us spoke; we were almost breathless from our sudden drop and subsequent squeezing between the ice-walls. We moved our feet, but could find no resting-place for them, nor could we see the bottom of the deep crevasse.

We looked up at the jagged hole in the crust that we had made, and No Runner shouted: 'Star Woman! Oh, little sister! Help us!'

'Oh, I see you! I see both of you!' she cried. 'Take courage! I shall save you!' And with that her head disappeared from the edge of the hole. We cried out to her again and again, but got no answer; she was gone!

'Oh, why didn't she wait! I wanted to tell her what to do!' No Runner groaned.

'And what was that?' I asked.

'To go after the skins of our kills and make of them a rope to pull us up!'

'That was just my thought. No doubt it was her thought, too,' I said.

'It may be that we are stuck so fast between these walls that we cannot get free from them,' said No Runner.

Neither of us had let go of our rifles in our drop. I told No Runner to take mine, handed it to him, and then got out my knife and cut a niche in each wall just above the level of my hips. Putting my hands into these I easily raised my body a few inches, and then, supporting it with one hand, used the other to wad the lower part of my blanket coat into protecting pads just below my hips. Settling down against them, I felt fairly comfortable. I then took both the rifles, and No Runner eased himself in the same manner.

But that comfort did not last. Our legs began to grow numb, and then to pain us. How time dragged! We pictured to one another Star Woman's movements. She was now, no doubt, at the camping-place, making a bundle of the skins. Now she was hurrying back along the rocky slope below

the ice. No doubt we had her climbing back upon the ice long before she arrived at the foot of the little lake!

The pain in our legs increased. We began to shiver from cold. Finally we feared that something had happened to Star Woman; and at last, when the small patch of blue sky above us began to fade with the coming of night, our fear turned into the certainty that something dreadful had happened to her; that she would never return; that we were doomed to die there in the ice! It was a terrible feeling!

Said No Runner: 'Oh, I don't want to die this way! Nothing can be worse than to die uselessly! Cold-Maker has trapped us only too well; we shall never escape from this hole!'

'Take courage! I still have hope,' I told him.

But I lied. I had none. Toward the last my thoughts were all of Star Woman. I thought it likely that she had also fallen into a crevasse. If not that, then she might have slipped to her death on the face of the ice-field. Or a wandering grizzly might have killed her. Recalling then all that she had done for me since I had first known her, I for the first time realized how much I cared for her.

'It can't be that we are never to meet again!' I groaned.

Star Woman to the Rescue

'Oh, Generous Raven! Oh, brother! Are you there?' came Star Woman's voice to us from above.

'Yes! Yes!' we cried, rousing from the torpor that had been fast numbing our senses.

'Then wait! Take courage! I shall soon have you out!' she answered.

'How? Are you making a rope?' No Runner shouted, but she did not answer, and he began to fret.

I said nothing. The mere sound of that voice from above had given me new life. Star Woman was safely back to us. I was very happy.

'Now, watch!' she called to us after a time, and down came a rope, a fuzzy broad rope of goatskin strips tied end to end.

'You first!' No Runner told me.

'No, you!' I answered.

'Then first our rifles,' he said, and tied them to the rope, called to Star Woman, and she pulled them up.

Down came the rope again and No Runner passed the end of it to me, insisting that I go up first. I had some difficulty in freeing myself from my tight squeeze between the ice-walls, but I needed just that exertion to regain my numbed strength. It was no small task to climb something like thirty feet hand over hand up a swaying rope.

I never should have made it had the rope been smooth; the thick hair and wool upon it kept my hands from slipping. Up I went, with many a pause, to be sure, and at the edge of the crevasse, Star Woman seized me by an arm and assisted me to pass up over it and get upon my feet. Then she threw her arms around me and hugged and kissed me, and I kissed her, and would have kissed her again, but she turned and called to No Runner to come on up.

Up he came, much more quickly than I had made the climb, and we reached out and yanked him over the edge.

Star Woman would have hugged and kissed him, too, but he pushed her from him, clapped his hands together, and cried: 'Now, look at that! Isn't she the wise sister: she thinks of everything!'

In my joy in getting free from the crevasse and standing beside the girl once more, I had had no thought for anything else. I now saw that she had with wise forethought planned every detail of our rescue: she had brought our axe and a stout length of a dry pine sapling along with the hides; had cut a deep, in-slanting hole in the ice and set the stick in it, firmly packing the chopped ice around it to keep it in place; and then, having made the rope, she had tied an end of it to the stake, and so had

IT WAS NO SMALL TASK TO CLIMB THIRTY FEET HAND OVER HAND UP A SWAYING ROPE

been free to help us up over the edge of the crevasse, the most difficult part of the climb!

'Oh, how thoughtful you are! We thought that something had happened to you; that you could not return to us; and all the time you were planning and working — wonderfully planning and working to make our rescue sure!' I told her in a none too steady voice.

'Ai! Thoughtful and wise and brave she is! Oh, what a great warrior woman you will be!' No Runner exclaimed.

'I don't know about that. I don't believe that I want to become a warrior woman,' she said.

'What? What? You don't want to be a warrior? Why do you say that — are you crazy?' he sputtered.

'No, I am not crazy. Of late I sometimes have different thoughts. Never mind, it is nothing for you to worry about ——'

'Of course it is nothing! Of course you will be a warrior; our great woman warrior chief!' No Runner cried, and nothing further was said about it.

We took up our weapons and the axe, and in the gathering night very cautiously made our way down to the talus slope below the ice, and then hurried along it to the little lake and our pile of meat.

We certainly had enough to talk about that night as we broiled goat meat and feasted and then sat long around our little fire. Star Woman told for the first time how it had happened that she had not gone down into the crevasse with us: she had stopped to tie a loosened moccasin string, and was hurrying to overtake us when the snow bridge broke and we shot down out of her sight!

Again we slept coldly there under the breath of the great ice-field. We arose before daylight and built a fire and ate a hurried meal. We then took a little of the goat meat and made up our packs and with the rising of the sun set out upon our return to the lake. We did not take our back trail, but kept well up in the scattering timber just below the talus slopes of the mountains.

During the day we saw numerous bands of goats resting and feeding upon the cliffs, but would not stop to hunt them. Night was falling when we turned down into the valley and fought our way through the brush to our canoe. We tumbled into it and cast off, and weakly paddled down the river and out across the head of the lake to our island lodge.

On the following morning, we loaded the canoe with all our belongings and paddled down the lake to the wide cottonwood point that was really the

end of the long, wide valley coming in from the southwest. We landed at the mouth of the large, clear stream that drained the valley and set up the lodge under some cottonwoods about fifty yards back from the shore. The broad, sandy beach of the lake and the banks of the stream were dotted with the tracks of different kinds of game; we had eaten enough of the musky goat meat to last us a lifetime, we thought, so we hurried to get the lodge in shape and then set out in quest of real meat.

The timber on the point was quite open, and the waist-high grass had many well-beaten trails in it. We followed one and another of these, gradually working our way back from the lake, and at a distance of less than half a mile from camp found just what we wanted: a big bull moose lazily arose from his bed, not fifty yards away, and stretched himself, and yawned and stared at us. That was the nearest I had ever been to one, and upon close view I thought him the ugliest, most ill-shaped animal I had ever seen.

On this morning No Runner was carrying his bow and arrows, and we had agreed that he was to do the killing, provided he could get close enough to the game; if not, then Star Woman and I were to use our rifles. Here was a fair bow shot and No Runner took it: the arrow whizzed deep into the

side of the big animal, and as he humped himself and turned to run away, blood began to gush from his nostrils and mouth; he trotted but a little way, staggered, fell with a loud thud, and was dead when we came up to him.

It was with no little satisfaction that I carefully examined him, his long, flexible nose, wicked little eyes, the tassel of skin and black hair drooping from his lower jaw, and his velvet-coated, palmated antlers, which would have been all of five feet spread had they attained full growth. I saw, too, that he was fully as tall as a buffalo bull. His weight I estimated at a thousand pounds.

When we cut into him, I saw that his flesh was very coarse-grained, and doubted whether it would be much better than the goat meat. My companions, however, declared that it was fully as good as buffalo meat, and Star Woman insisted that we should carry the greater part of it to camp, where she would cut it into sheets and dry it for future use. But after No Runner and I had made three trips to the lodge with all that we could stagger under each time, we sneaked off up the stream on discovery. It was late in the afternoon when we started, so we did not go more than a couple of miles, but as far as we went, we found but little beaver sign; here and there a family had a home

in the bank and a quantity of cut wood in the deep water out from it; no attempt had been made to dam the stream. We carefully examined every sandbar and mudbank for the three-legged trail of the white beaver, but, as No Runner said, lack of signs of him was no proof that he had not gone up the stream.

Upon our return to the lodge, Star Woman scolded us for shirking the work she had laid out for us, and so leaving a part of the moose carcass to the wolves. Nevertheless, she had a kettleful of well-boiled boss ribs on the fire, and gave us generous dishes of it. I thought that I had never tasted better meat. She had plied her knife all the afternoon with good result: the brush surrounding the lodge was red with the thin sheets of meat that she had cut and spread out to dry.

Before going to sleep, we made our plans for the following day, deciding that we would take a few traps and go away up the stream on discovery, and that we would not set the traps unless we could find signs of Three-Legs, and if so, we would place them at the foot of slides that he was using.

We slept soundly throughout the night. When I awoke in the early morning, No Runner was back from his bath and combing his hair before the fire, while Star Woman, on the other side of it, was

broiling some meat for us. I hurried out and had my plunge in the cold lake water, and upon my return to the lodge, Star Woman signed to me to look at No Runner. I saw at once that something was wrong with him; that he was not the cheerful, laughing, joking companion who had lain down to sleep beside me the previous evening. He sat humped over on our couch, in deep thought, apparently, and as motionless as a stone.

'Come, brother, eat! And you, too, almost-brother!' Star Woman commanded, and set some well-broiled meat before us.

No Runner drew his dish closer to him and then slowly ate mouthful after mouthful of his portion, never once looking at nor speaking to us. Finally Star Woman signed to me to speak to him. I refused.

And at that she suddenly cried out: 'Brother, why are you so silent this morning?'

'Because of my dream. I am called: this day I begin my medicine fast and sleep!' he told us.

'Oh, no, brother! Not to-day! Not until we end our search for the white beaver and return to camp,' said Star Woman.

'My dream — my vision was plain enough. I must begin my fast this day!' he repeated.

'And I say that you must not — not until we

finish our search for the white one,' she insisted.

'I must fast and pray, as it has been revealed to me to do, but that need not stop our quest for the white beaver. While I am doing that, you two must try to find him. I believe that he is living somewhere along this stream,' he said.

Star Woman and I looked at one another, and at him.

'But what will the people say when they hear about it — about you off by yourself, fasting for some days and nights, and almost-sister and I keeping the lodge and going here and there on discovery?' I asked him.

'What can they say? Nothing!' he cried. 'Why? Because sister is different; because she is to become our woman warrior! All the people know that. It is her privilege to do many things that other girls may not do. Not even the most terrible-tongued old woman in the camp will dare to say a word against her!'

'Oh, it is not that, brother. I do not care what the old women gossips may say about me; my one thought is that you should not seek your medicine until after we return to our people,' Star Woman told him.

'Listen, both of you! This much I may tell you of my vision!' he exclaimed.

'It was dusk. I went from here out to the shore of the lake — right out there where the stream empties into it, and there I saw a brush-covered object floating upon the water. "What is that strange thing? It was not there a little time ago," I said to myself.

'A voice — I may not tell you what voice it was — answered me: "Go examine it!" I was told. As I crossed the sands, I saw that the brush nearly concealed four logs — four large, dry logs that were lashed side by side with rawhide strips. I came to the edge of the water and looked down into the brush, and there I saw myself, my own self lying upon a robe-covered bed of balsam boughs!

'"Is it possible that that sleeper is I?" I cried, and the voice answered: "It is you. I have shown you what to do. To-morrow evening, upon just such a raft you must drift out and begin your medicine fast!"

'There! I have told you all that I can of my sacred dream. So now you two see as plainly as I do that I must follow it. You shall help me make the raft, and when night falls I will lie down upon it and you shall push it out from shore to drift — and drift, here, there, as the gods direct it, until I obtain my medicine vision!'

'Oh, dear brother!' Star Woman gasped. 'Think

of the danger! Oh, I cannot bear to let you go floating out upon that deep, wide water! Think of the Under-Water People out there and you all alone among them in the dark night! Oh, you must not do it! If you are determined to take your medicine fast, take it somewhere here in the timber or up on a mountain-top.'

'You, sister, yourself almost vowed to Sun, should be the last one to advise me to pay no heed to my dream. Say to me not one more word against that which I am bound to do!' he cried.

And he turned to me and asked, 'You, almost-brother, you will help me make the raft?'

'Yes, I will help you,' I answered.

'If I must, then I must! I will gather the brush for your raft bed,' Star Woman told him, as she furtively brushed away her tears and set some freshly broiled meat before us.

I determined that my almost-brother should have a good raft for his medicine fast. After some search I found two dead white pine trees standing near the edge of the stream and chopped them down and cut two sixteen-foot lengths from each one. I did all the axeing, for No Runner was not good at it; his way of getting a tree down was to hack it around and around until it fell; the stump

he left looked as though it had been gnawed by a beaver.

One by one we floated the logs down the stream to the lake and then firmly lashed them side by side with strips of moose hide. Star Woman then made a fine, thick bed of balsam boughs on the center of the raft and piled a number of cottonwood branches all along its ends and sides, and our work was done. Night was almost at hand.

We returned to the lodge, built a fire, and Star Woman broiled some meat. No Runner would not touch it; he said that he would begin his fast right then.

'Oh, how I wish that one of our medicine men was here to pray and make sacrifice for you before you start out!' said Star Woman.

'I have been thinking about that. I must do it myself. I shall sacrifice my bow and arrows!' he said.

'Oh, no! They are too valuable for that!' I objected. 'Sacrifice something else—a few rifle balls, one of the horn spoons, or a pair of moccasins.'

'When one makes sacrifice he gives of the best that he has: bow, arrows, quiver. I shall make a complete sacrifice of them,' he declared, and proceeded to fasten a long, flat stone to the quiver in order to sink it.

Star Woman to the Rescue

It was dusk when we returned to the shore of the lake. No Runner tossed his sacrifice out into deep water and then prayed the Under-Water People and all the gods to keep us safe from all enemies, and especially to aid him in his coming fast.

'A few last words to you two,' he told us after he had finished praying. 'No matter how long I am gone, do not come out to search for me, for I might still be fasting, I might be having my medicine vision, and you would awaken me and break it. You see how it is: I must have no disturbing thoughts.'

He stepped aboard the raft, lay down upon the soft, springy couch with his rifle, and spread his robe over him, and we pushed the raft free from shore. A slight breeze was blowing up the lake and it wafted the raft slowly off in that direction. Star Woman and I sat down upon the sand and watched it go. She reached out and grasped my hand and retained it while the raft slowly drifted on and on and was finally lost to us in the darkness of the night. She was crying.

At last she said: 'Oh, almost-brother! What a comfort you are to me! Always, with you, I have felt happy — felt safe from all dangers!'

'I am glad of that!' I answered.

And at that she cried in earnest and said to me, haltingly: 'Oh, almost-brother! I can tell no one else, my mother, father, brother, but I feel that I can, that I must tell you just what I am, just how I feel! Almost-brother, I am a coward! Almost-brother, I know that I can never become a warrior woman!'

'No Runner's departure — floating off there into the night upon his medicine quest — has made you low-hearted. You will feel differently in the morning. Come! Let us go to the lodge!' I told her.

We took some wood into the lodge and built a cheerful fire. Star Woman dried her tears but remained very quiet and thoughtful. We talked of No Runner, wondering whither the fitful night wind would carry him and how long it would be before he returned to us. Then, after making our plans for the morrow, we smoothed our couches and lay down.

Across the lodge from me Star Woman lay with her face to the fire, and I saw that she almost at once fell asleep. I remained awake a long time, staring at the lessening, fitful blaze, and then at the coals fading from bright red into powdery ashes. Outside there were faint rustlings in the grass and brush; sudden snappings of dry twigs;

the soft patter of padded feet; strange snufflings and snortings. I shivered under my warm robe, reached out and drew my rifle to me. I began to tremble from fear! I tried to reason myself out of it: those noises I heard were nothing but the movements of some small prowlers of the night, I told myself, but could not be convinced. Perhaps they were a war party of enemies about to attack us! Or — ghosts? Enemy spirit wanderers of the night?

'No! No! There are no ghosts!' I told myself, and the next moment heard myself murmuring, 'Hai'yu, Nat-os! Nok-spum'ok-it!' Or, in English, 'O Sun! Help me!'

CHAPTER XII

HUNTING WITH STAR WOMAN

'WHY did I make that appeal? Have I, too, become a sun-worshiper?' I asked myself, and could not or would not answer the question. Anyhow, the fear that possessed me gradually subsided. Almost at once I fell asleep, and did not awaken until Star Woman called me, and I opened my eyes to broad daylight.

'Almost-brother, it is a happy morning; just hear the little birds singing! I have had my bath; hurry out to the lake and take yours; and while you are there, have a look for our medicine-faster's raft,' she told me.

'Ai! That I shall do!' I answered, and got into my blanket coat, took up my clothing and hurried out. Along the trail and in the sand of the shore were no tracks of anything larger than coyotes and deer. There were the fresh, baby-like footprints of a wolverine. I felt sure that it was he who had snuffled and snorted around the lodge.

I looked out upon the lake and along its shores before taking my bath, and again while dressing, but saw nothing of the raft, and upon my return

to the lodge told Star Woman that the night breeze must have carried it far up the lake and out of our sight past the long, rocky points that form the narrows.

'Yes, that is also my thought,' she answered. 'This morning, somehow, I do not feel as I did last night. I believe that brother is safe enough upon his raft and that he will soon get his medicine and return to us.'

'Almost-sister,' I exclaimed, 'something happened to me last night. Soon after you fell asleep a great fear came upon me. Outside there were strange noises: my fear increased. I could not account for what I heard; rustlings of the brush; footsteps; queer snortings. At last my fear became unbearable and I cried out to Sun for help. Do you know, fear almost at once left me and I fell asleep, and never once wakened until you called me!'

'Oh, Generous Raven! How glad I am that you asked his help!' she said. 'And you got it! Fear left you! Oh, how good to us is the Maker of the Days!'

After a hasty breakfast of broiled moose meat we packed all the dried meat into bundles, and suspended them from branches of the trees well out of the reach of the night prowlers. Then we each

made a little pack of two traps and a blanket, and, taking up our weapons, set out up the stream on discovery. Following closely its bank, we crossed the long point and entered a narrow but not deep gorge in the wide and heavily timbered valley. Here the stream was very swift and rocky, affording no places for beavers to make their dens. Here and there we saw cuttings that they had made when passing up and down the stream, some of them quite fresh, and so were quite sure that somewhere farther on we should find a colony of them. Otter slides were numerous, and once we saw one of the animals climb upon a rock with a large fish in his mouth. He slipped back into the water before we could even aim our rifles at him, and disappeared.

The gorge was little more than a mile long. We passed out of it into a beautiful, wide, sloping valley that had many open, grassy parks. On our right arose steeply the red-rock mountain that separated the valley from the lake that we had left. On the other side, and much farther away, was the spur of mountains that formed the divide between the waters flowing east and south to the Gulf of Mexico, and east and north into the Arctic Ocean. Off ahead of us, at a distance of twelve or fifteen miles, perhaps more, the wide head of the valley

mounted up in a series of ice-capped cliffs to the summit of the range.

And now along the less swiftly flowing stream we began to find beaver dens in high banks of alluvial soil. The entrances to these were, of course, several feet below the surface of the water, and out in front of them were piles of quaking aspen, cottonwood, and willow cuttings that were being brought in and sunk for the winter supply of food. I now crossed the stream and, I on my side and Star Woman on the other, we began a close search of the banks, slides, and sandbars for signs of Three-Legs. We frequently saw beavers swimming ahead of us, but made no attempt to shoot them. Elk and deer and moose trails were everywhere, and we were more than once startled by some of the animals springing up near us and crashing away through the brush. We found, too, other tracks that made us pause and look carefully off into the timber and brush in all directions — tracks of huge grizzlies, some of them very fresh!

After we had followed the stream for some miles, Star Woman, who was some distance ahead, signed me to hurry to her; that she had made a discovery. I crossed the stream on a log that bridged it, and was soon at her side.

'Look at that!' she exclaimed, pointing to a

trail in soft, watery mud at the foot of the bank upon which we stood. 'Look at that beaver trail! I believe that Three-Legs made it!'

The trail was only five or six feet in length, a quarter-circle the beaver had made from the water out upon the mud and back, and the mud was so soft that it had pretty well oozed back into the footprints the animal had made. In several places we could see slight indentures left by the hindfeet and the right forefoot of the animal, but of left forefoot imprints not even the slightest sign of one.

'It does look as though Three-Legs made that trail,' I said, 'but the mud is so soft, has so well settled back, that we can't be sure. Whatever animal made it was traveling upstream. Let us go on and look more carefully than ever for the trail of the white one.'

I turned back downstream and recrossed it on the log, and we resumed our search. After a time we came to a beautiful but not high fall, the water pouring over a ledge of rock into a deep pool that was full of trout and whitefish. The fall was not too high for fish to ascend, but I felt sure that beavers could not do it — that all passing up the stream were obliged to take to the shore at this point. And both shores were sandy! If Three-Legs had

made that trail in the mud below, here we should certainly make sure of it. Lo! when I came to the fall, there in the soft sand a little way out from it was that which we sought! There a very large beaver had recently passed up, and where there should have been impressions of his left forefoot, the sand was smooth, or only slightly marked with a round indentation!

I signed across to Star Woman: 'Here walked Three-Legs! He was traveling up ahead direction!'

The waterfall roared so loudly that we could not have heard one another unless we shouted, and that was not a wise thing to do.

Star Woman signed back: 'Stop where you are! I want to see the trail!'

She ran back downstream, took off her moccasins and leggings, crossed a shallow ford, and hurried to me and stared down at the trail.

'It is the trail of Three-Legs!' she exclaimed, and danced upon the sand, waving her rifle in time to the song that she lightly hummed. Almost I danced with her. I was as happy as she at our discovery. I felt sure that it was now only a matter of a day or two, when we should have the white-furred hide of Three-Legs laced into a willow drying-frame.

Again I carefully examined the trail; there had

been no wind or rain for a long time; it appeared to be quite fresh. But trails in the sand in dry, still weather are deceptive as to age; this one may have been a day old, five days old, ten days old, for all that we could tell. Star Woman came and sat down beside me and put on her leggings and moccasins, and I told her my thought.

'Oh, what does it matter whether he passed up here last night or many nights ago? He is somewhere ahead of us, and we are going to find him!' she exclaimed. And added, 'You see that I have put on my moccasins; you can cross over and follow up that shore for a time.'

Ahead of us both shores were low and gravelly as far as we could see up the stream. I went on with the girl, intending to cross at the first opportunity. We had gone but a little way, however, when we suddenly came to the shore of a beautiful lake nestling at the side of the high, red-rock, point mountain of the spur separating the two great valleys. On its other — left — side, the heavily timbered slope of the valley ran gently up for several miles to the talus belts and yellow rock peaks of the Arctic divide. The valley beyond the lake was also heavily timbered.

'I had no thought of finding a lake here!' said Star Woman.

'Nor did I. Three-Legs must be somewhere along the stream at the head of it,' I answered.

We sat down for a long look at the lake and its surroundings. The point mountain was dotted with small bands of bighorn and goats. It towered up from the lake shore in a series of cliffs and shale slopes, and all the slopes were criss-crossed with broad trails that the game had made. Near the upper end of the lake the first rise of the mountain was an apparently sheer cliff all of five hundred feet in height. Well toward the top seven large goats were leisurely making their way across it; at that distance we could not see the narrow outcrop of rock that they were traversing; they had the appearance of walking upon air. While we were watching them, a large piece of rock broke loose from the edge of the cliff above them and in its fall struck the next to the lead animal; out it shot from the cliff, turning end over end in strange contortions in its dreadful drop through space. Star Woman cried out in pity as we watched it, and we had a sudden attack of sickening nausea; a gone feeling in the stomach. The boulder dropped the faster and crashed first upon the rocky lake shore; the goat struck a few seconds later, and the thuds of their fall echoed and reëchoed through the valley like the reports of two cannon.

'Ah! Ah! What a terrible sight that was! It made me sick! How I pity the poor animal!' Star Woman exclaimed.

'I feel the same way,' I said.

'What our mountain friends, the Koo'te-nai, tell us is true,' she went on. 'They say that these animals are being constantly killed by falling rocks and ice!'

'Well, what we have seen saves us the trouble of killing some meat. Let's go up there and take what we need of the fallen one,' I proposed.

We found a place where we could jump from boulder to boulder across the stream, and then made our way up the lake shore to the fallen animal. It was about the most sickening sight that I have ever seen; the force of the impact upon the rocks from that tremendous height had splintered every bone in the body; flesh, bones, intestines, and skin were just one bloody inseparable mass! We turned from it with involuntary shiverings and went on to the head of the lake.

We found plenty of beaver signs at the mouth of the inlet, and, following it up a little way, came to a series of three ponds that the animals had made by damming the stream. There were eleven lodges in all, and no new ones were being constructed.

We were quite sure that Three-Legs had come here in quest of a wife and home, and equally sure that the male beavers had driven him away. We passed the last of the ponds, went on upstream for a half-mile or more, and came to the foot of a natural pond or lakelet, about three hundred yards long and a couple of hundred yards in width. Here at the wide and shallow outlet was the beginning of a dam, which, when completed, would raise the water of the pond several feet, thus flooding a quantity of young quaking aspen timber that was at present well back from the shore line, too far back to be cut and brought in without great expenditure of time and strength.

The construction work so far was the usual commencement of a dam, a line of willow and alder branches laid side by side in a straight line from bank to bank, the butts of the branches pointing upstream. Near the farther bank was a space several feet in width where no branches had been laid; there was to be the spillway, the place where the stream was to flow uninterruptedly while the dam was being built; it would then be closed and the water would soon rise and flood the desired food timber. When this was felled tree by tree, and then cut into workable lengths, a part of the material would be used for lodge-building, and the

rest, always the best-barked pieces, would be sunk near the lodge for winter food.

The instant we discovered the branches set side by side across the stream, we came to an abrupt halt and stood for a time staring out across the lakelet and at its shore line, hoping to see the dam-builders.

'Not in sight. No doubt they are very tired after their hard night's work and are asleep in a drift pile somewhere up the stream,' said Star Woman.

She started on, I following, and lo! we discovered the trail of Three-Legs: he had come out upon the sandy shore at the foot of the lakelet, cut a small willow shoot, eaten the bark off it, and then gone back into the water. In one place he had crossed a muddy depression in the shore, and, after carefully examining his trail there, we decided that it was two, perhaps three days old. We turned back and examined the shore at the outlet, trying to determine the number of beavers that were building the dam, and if Three-Legs was one of them. From the signs that we found, we concluded that no more than a pair of the animals were doing the work, and that it had been commenced only two nights back. Both shores of the outlet were gravelly, so the workers had left no trails upon it. Star Woman

suddenly turned and looked at me and I looked at her, and we each knew what the other was thinking.

I nodded my head. 'Yes, almost-sister! It may be that Three-Legs has at last wived, and that the pair of them are building this dam,' I told her.

'We must watch here this evening,' she said.

'Yes. Also, the sun is well past the middle, and we have to eat. Let us go up on the mountain-side and kill something, and then come here and watch,' I told her.

It was not a long climb up through the timber to the first cliff of the mountain. All the way up we saw plenty of fresh signs of elk and deer and moose, but failed to get even a glimpse of any of the animals themselves. There was considerable bighorn and goat sign at the foot of the cliff, and that encouraged us to climb to the top of it, which we did by following a break in its face. From there on to the summit of the mountain the slope was just a series of rocky ledges, all of them climbable, many of them supporting small patches of juniper and stunted pine.

As we stood upon the cliff making up our minds which way to go, a very large goat appeared upon the edge of the third cliff from us and deliberately sat down upon his haunches — just as a dog does

— and stared, as we thought, straight down at us. Star Woman laughed outright and so did I. We could safely do that, for the animal was far beyond the range of our rifles.

'Did you ever see anything so funny as that?' she asked. 'Why, I can hardly believe my eyes! Who without seeing it could believe that a cloven-footed animal, a re-chewer of food, would sit down upon his haunches just as the meat-eaters do?'

'It must be a goat habit,' I said. 'Almost-sister, don't you remember that the hair upon the back of the hinderparts of the goats that we killed was matted down tightly to the skin, and somewhat worn?'

'Oh, yes! I did notice it! I wondered what caused it! That is explained. We have not rightly named these animals; they should be called "Sitters-upon-the-Cliffs!"' she exclaimed.

The goat continued gazing down below, not alertly, as a bighorn, a deer, or antelope watches for signs of danger, but with slow, ungraceful, sideways movements of his long-bearded, short-necked, silly-faced head. We doubted whether he saw us, or, if he did, we thought he considered us not worth a second glance. He presently got upon his forefeet and turned and went back from the edge of the ledge and out of our sight.

'There! Now we can go! We can easily approach and kill that old one!' I said.

Star Woman wrinkled her nose and sniffed. 'Already I can smell and taste musk! O Sun! Help us to kill good meat with which to satisfy our hunger!' she exclaimed.

And she had no more than said that than a very large bighorn ram stepped into view on the first ledge from us. 'Sun answers my prayer!' she gasped, and in her wonder and sudden excitement at that, accidentally discharged her rifle.

Bang! it went, and at the report the ram threw up his head and leaped back from the verge of the ledge. I fired as he made a second leap, and thought I saw him flinch.

'You hit him! Come on, you hit him!' Star Woman cried, running up toward the ledge.

'Wait! Reload your rifle!' I called to her, and she stopped short and sadly looked at me and then at her weapon.

'Almost-brother,' she said, 'there is no use in my going on with this. I am always forgetting to do the right thing at the right time! Why, I cannot even become a hunter — how, then, can I become a warrior! Almost-brother, the place for me is in the lodge, and the awl and needle and thread must be my weapons!'

'You did not learn to sew all at once; neither can you become a hunter without much practice. Take courage!' I told her.

She did not answer that. We reloaded and went up on the ledge. The ram was nowhere in sight, but we found some spatterings of blood along the trail and followed him from ledge to ledge up toward the summit of the great mountain. Twice we saw the animal, far ahead and limping badly; my shot had evidently broken his left foreleg. We saw, too, goats to the right and left of us, and a large band of bighorn ewes and young that we could most likely have approached, but, having wounded the ram, I was determined that he should be put out of his misery.

On and on we went, and upon reaching the top of the last one of the ledges, we saw the ram again; he was almost at the summit of the mountain and a long way off; if he started down the other slope, we should never get him. We fired together as he halted for a moment upon the crest of the mountain, his body sharply outlined against the blue sky, and at the report of our rifles he fell, rolled over three or four times, and lodged against a large boulder protruding from the shale.

'Almost-sister, we can take no credit for that,' I said, as we reloaded. 'It was just by chance that

one or the other of our bullets killed at that far distance.'

'You are mistaken; there was no chance in it!' she exclaimed, turning and giving me a reproachful look. 'The gods have given you or me strong medicine; that is why the ram lies dead up there!'

I did not dispute her belief. We climbed the steep slope, all of three hundred yards, and examined our kill. The fatal bullet had entered the head at the base of his left ear, and was lodged against the skin on the opposite side. I cut it out and handed it to the girl.

'It is your bullet!' I said.

She looked at it carefully, turning it over and over, and sighed.

'Why do you do that? Are you not pleased at what you have done?' I asked.

She did not answer. She turned and climbed the few steps to the summit and I followed. We stood upon it and looked almost straight down at the long, wide lake, all of a mile below us. Not a breath of wind ruffled its dark blue surface. Far as it was, we could plainly see the V-shaped silvery wakes of the lone loons, and of the little flocks of ducks and geese that were swimming here and there, although it was impossible to see the fowls themselves.

'Look hard down there; perhaps we can dis-

cover brother's raft,' Star Woman told me. But look as we would, we could not see it, and she became greatly depressed. 'It may be that the Under-Water People have torn the raft apart and drawn him down to their camp in the black depths!' she wailed.

'Don't worry,' I told her. 'No Runner is safe enough somewhere down there. The raft is lodged against the shore and at this distance we cannot distinguish it from the dark rocks and the green brush growing among them.'

While we stood there upon the summit, the sun went down behind the ice-capped rim at the head of the valley. Star Woman was praying for the safety of her brother. I waited patiently until she finished, and we then turned back to the ram. The day was so far gone that we could not watch for Three-Legs that evening. We dislodged the ram from the boulder and it went rolling and bounding down the shale slope to the first of the ledges. We dragged him across that, tumbled him off and he rolled down to the next ledge. And so we went until we got the carcass to the fourth ledge, wide, well-grassed, a trickle of water running in a furrow across it. There we dressed the animal, gathered a good pile of limbs from a fallen pine, and made camp.

We allowed the fire to burn completely down to

a bed of coals before broiling some of the fat meat of the ram; even then it had a pitchy flavor and odor. We ate sparingly of it, and promised ourselves a hearty meal in the morning, when we could do our broiling upon a cottonwood fire at the foot of the mountain.

It was now black night. We sat close to our little fire, very tired, very sleepy, yet afraid to lie down and sleep. Above and below us there was the frequent tinkle of shale dislodged by some passing animal, a grizzly, perhaps. And well we knew that our fire was a beacon to any war party of our mountain enemies that might be traveling through the valley: Kal'i-spels, Pend d'Oreilles, Nez Percés — we were at war with all the West-Side tribes. From away up the valley there came to us the loud crash of falling ice; there was the constant rising and falling drone of numberless waterfalls that we had not heard in the daytime.

'If only we could understand them, those voices of the mountains!' Star Woman exclaimed. 'What wonderful tales they must be telling of what they have seen since Old Man made the earth!'

'Lie down and sleep, and I will keep watch!' I told her.

'Yes, if you will awaken me at midnight to take my turn,' she answered.

I agreed to that. She found a soft place in the grass, covered herself as well as she could, and was almost at once sleeping soundly. I replenished the fire and stretched out before it, promising myself that I would keep wide awake. Within five minutes I knew that I could not do it.

'If an old grizzly comes prowling along here, he will not touch us; he will go off with the carcass of the ram; and better no fire than that it should be seen by enemies!' I said to myself, and also slept.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PRIZE IS WON

I was awakened by the shrill chattering of a meat bird. I opened my eyes and saw the crest of the mountain above us all aflame with the first rays of the rising sun. I called to Star Woman and with a startled, muffled cry she sprang up. Nothing had happened to disturb our night-long sleep. Apparently no prowlers of any kind had come near us, for the carcass of the ram lay just as we had left it.

'Oh, what a good sleep I had! What a happy morning it is!' my almost-sister cried, and knelt at the little streamlet, bathed her face and hands, dampened her hair, and then stood up to dress it. A beautiful sight it was, once she had unbound and combed it. Retaining the crimp of the two great braids, it rippled down over her shoulders and back almost to the ground, and in the light of the morning sun it had the color of golden bronze. I washed, and sat back and combed out and rebraided my hair, the while watching every movement of the girl. I thought that in all the world there could not be another so beautiful, so graceful as she was, nor

one of such brave and faithful heart. I could not keep my thoughts to myself. I suddenly cried out: 'Oh, almost-sister! How beautiful you are! How I do love you!'

'Oh, Generous Raven! Do you — do you really?' she asked, so low that I could barely hear her.

'Yes! Yes, I do!' I cried, and sprang up and kissed her. And at that, oh, what a queer sensation flashed all through me. It frightened me; embarrassed me. We turned away from one another; my hands trembled as I went on braiding my hair. I asked myself what had happened to me; could find no answer.

'Oh, almost-sister! I have a very strange feeling! I am suddenly weak!' I complained.

'So am I,' she faltered. 'And I know what made us feel so: it was our kiss! Promise me — promise me now, oh, Generous Raven, that you will not kiss me again!'

'I promise!' I answered, and meant it.

Having finished our toilet, we hurriedly made up our packs, and then skinned the ram, rolled and bound a good portion of its meat in the hide, and started down the mountain dragging the load after us. It was easy work; we soon got it down to the edge of the lake, where we had a good feast of thick

steaks broiled to a turn upon clean cottonwood coals.

After some talk we decided that it was best for us to remain right where we were until the sun neared its going-down place in the west, when we would proceed as quietly as possible to the foot of the lakelet and watch for the appearance of the dam-builders; we had great faith that one of them would prove to be old Three-Legs.

After an hour or so of utter idleness out on the shore of the lake, we felt that we must do something to pass the time; we were too young, too full of life to sit still when we could be moving about. Finally, Star Woman suggested that we build a lodge, and found excuses for our doing it. We were likely to remain in the valley for some days in our quest for the white one and would need shelter in case a storm came up. Also, the lodge would hide our fire from the sharp eyes of any passing enemy; and it would be so comfortable; so homelike; we should be well repaid for our work in building it!

'Enough said; we will build it!' I told her, and we hurried back into the timber and began gathering the material for it.

We had not brought the axe with us, and so were obliged to make a long search for dead and fallen young pines for the lodge-poles. After a large

number of them had been collected, we set them up in lodge shape, very closely together, and then covered them with layers of bark, brush, and tufts of sod. Finally, we cut a lot of balsam boughs and laid them for our beds, made the door curtain of the hide of the ram, and our work was completed. We had made a good lodge, all of twelve feet in diameter and rainproof. It was mid-afternoon. I gathered some wood and built a fire in the lodge, and when it had burned down to a mass of coals, Star Woman broiled some meat upon them and we ate a well-earned meal.

'Almost-brother, isn't it pleasant in here!' she said, as we finished our repast and lay back upon our soft couches.

'Very, very pleasant! Would that we could camp here all summer!' I told her. 'Just you and I camping here, hunting, trapping, going now and then upon discovery to the far ends of this great valley, oh, what happiness that would be!'

'It would! It would! But it cannot be as we want,' she answered. 'We must soon return to the big lake, there to meet brother. And then in a short time we must return to our people, for they will be moving to fresh trapping streams, and thence on to Many-White-Men's-Houses [1] to trade.'

[1] Many-White-Men's-Houses (Ah-kai'ta-pis-ka): Fort Benton.

'Well, anyhow, this evening, up there at that new dam building, we shall get ——'

'Don't you dare say it!' she cried, sitting up and clapping hands together. 'Oh, don't say it, almost-brother,' she pleaded, 'for that would bring us bad luck. Do not forget that him we seek is a medicine animal; we must, therefore, not assert that we shall do this and that: we must pray the gods to pity us and give us success in our quest of the white one.'

'Well, then, I hope that we may get Three-Legs this evening,' I said.

'Ah! That is better,' she told me, and lay back on her couch.

After a time I looked across at her and thought that she was asleep. I became restless, and as quietly as I could I went outside and down to the lake shore. I watched the waterfowl drifting here and there upon the still water. Close inshore huge trout were leaping and swimming, so close that I could see their eyes. Across from me a band of elk cows and calves came out upon the shore and drank and splashed about in the shallow water and then lay down upon the sand. Beyond them, up on the lowest of the talus slopes of the Arctic divide, there was a band of bighorns, their white rumps appearing and disappearing as they kept turning toward

me and from me as they fed upon the sparse browse growing in among the rocks. While I was idly watching them, they took fright at something down at the foot of the slope, banded together, and went leaping and running off up the steep mountain-side, stopping now and then to look back, and at last disappeared over the summit of the mountain. I felt very uneasy about their sudden flight. I did not believe that a bear or a cougar was the cause of it; man alone could have alarmed them enough to cause them to leave the mountain-side; and if man had done it, he was not of our people: some of our enemies had come into the great valley!

I started back to tell Star Woman what I had seen, and as I neared the lodge I heard her praying — caught some of her words.

'... And relieve me! O Sun! Oh, great ruler of the day,' she pitifully cried; 'give me a revealing dream! Give me, I beg you, that which I so much desire!'

'And what is that?' I asked as I stepped inside.

'You heard! What did you hear?' she faltered, turning her back to me and bending low over her couch.

'You asked for a revealing dream; for something that you desire. What is it?'

'Oh! And you heard no more than that?'

'No, nothing more.'

She turned toward me then and smiled. 'What I asked of Sun is between him and me. Promise that you will not question me about it.'

'I promise,' I answered. But somehow her pitiful cry for relief kept steadfastly in my mind. What was it that she so much wanted? At times it seemed that I could almost sense it, and then always it would fade away just as a lifting fog half-reveals an unknown object, only to thicken and hide it again.

'Well, almost-sister, it may be that there are enemies in the valley,' I said, and went on to tell her about the flight of the bighorns. We agreed that we could not retreat just when there was great promise of success in our quest of the white one. It was not by any means certain that the bighorns had been frightened by man. We should use the utmost caution in all that we did, and, as Star Woman said, have faith that the gods would bring us safely through all dangers.

The sun was well down in the west when, after another feast of broiled bighorn meat, we covered the lodge-fire and set out to begin our watch at the lakelet. But first we went to the edge of the timber and, without exposing ourselves, looked all up and down the shores of the lake and up along the slopes

of the mountains. Some deer and elk were feeding and playing along the opposite shore; there was a band of goats upon the talus slope where, earlier in the day, I had seen the bighorns take fright and run. Long years afterward, I found a salt spring in the deep coulee which cuts across this slope. It is a salting-place for the game for miles around. Whenever I went there for meat, I never failed to get it.

We saw more game upon other slopes of the mountain, and while we stood there a small band of buffalo appeared at the foot of the lake. The valley seemed to be peaceful enough; it was hard to believe that there might be a war party somewhere in it. But well we knew how deceitful appearances sometimes are; we decided to proceed with the utmost caution, and not to fire our rifles at the white beaver if we were lucky enough to see him; we would use our traps to his undoing!

Slowly, noiselessly we made our way up through the timber to the foot of the lakelet, and crouched in some thick brush about fifty yards from the dam, along which more brush had been piled during the night. The sun went down behind the crest of the great mountain at our backs and the shadows of night slowly stole down into the valley. A lone bull moose came out from the brush on the east

side of the lakelet, drank slowly and deeply, and turned and began browsing upon the tender tips and leaves of the red willows.

Star Woman nudged me and whispered: 'Oh, what a big bull he is! See how round his rump is! He is very fat! How I wish that we could kill him!'

'Greedy one! We have plenty of meat now!' I answered, and just then we were startled by a loud flapping and splashing at the head of the lakelet.

Two beavers were coming down the stream into it, playfully chasing one another, diving and coming up to the surface with a force that threw them half out of the water. They soon ceased their play, however, and came swimming straight toward the outlet, and we saw that they both had dark heads; we were terribly disappointed; we more than hoped — we had made ourselves believe — that the male one of the pair would prove to be Three-Legs!

On they came, straight down the outlet to the brush-pile, and swam and splashed along the face of it from shore to shore, frequently climbing out upon it and sitting up with a rippling, audible shake of their glistening wet fur, and turning their bright-eyed heads this way and that way as they examined their work. The position of one of the branches did not suit the larger one of the pair —

the male; he seized it with his forepaws, and sitting back pulled it toward him and farther up to the inner face of the pile. The two then slipped into the water and swam to the farther shore of the outlet and just above the dam, and sat up side by side at the edge of the water. Leaning toward one another, they touched noses and bobbed their heads three or four times.

I whispered to Star Woman: 'Just see that! They are kissing; making love!'

'Silly one! They are not making love; they are planning what to do. Just you watch!' she answered.

She had no more than said it when they pushed out into the water and swam up the outlet into the lakelet and up it for forty or fifty yards, then went ashore and waddled across the sand into the brush, the male in the lead.

'There! I told you so! They have gone after more brush for their dam!' said Star Woman.

They soon appeared, the male with so large a branch of willow held by his teeth that he was obliged to move tail first across the shore, by jerks dragging the branch along. The female edged sideways after him with a much smaller branch. They soon got their loads into deep water and started down with them, both animals completely hidden

from us by the foliage of the branches. That was a strange — an uncanny sight: it was as though the branches were swimming along over the surface of the lakelet by their own power!

Suddenly we heard a loud splashing of the water under the larger branch and it ceased to move; at the same time the female came out from under her branch and we could plainly hear her whimpering, chattering call as she swam toward the large branch, something like fifteen yards ahead. We had not time to ask one another what this meant when up popped two fighting, splashing beavers close in front of her, and Star Woman and I almost cried out aloud the 'Oh! Oh!' that we stifled as we tensely clasped hands, for it was Three-Legs! Three-Legs himself who had attacked the unsuspecting male! We had not seen him coming; we never knew whence he came.

Bitterly they fought there for a moment, splashing the water, beating it into foam with their broad tails, and then they suddenly sank and Star Woman gasped: 'Three-Legs has him by the throat: the poor new-married one dies!'

But she was mistaken. The young male managed to break loose from the old one's jaws; he came up close beside his mate and swam off up the lakelet as fast as he could go, she following and

uttering her plaintive whimper louder than ever; it had an almost human note of distress!

'Oh, poor beaver wife! How I pity her!' I heard my almost-sister murmur.

'I don't care if there is a war party in the valley! I shall shoot that Three-Legs as soon as I can get a good aim at him!' I hissed, and she emphatically nodded her head in approval.

Three-Legs came up just behind the female, passed her, and again attacked the male and they sank at once, and she dived after them. It is possible that she nipped the white one and caused him to loose his hold on her mate; anyhow, she and Three-Legs came up almost side by side, she again whimpering, he treading water with his hindfeet and turning around and around looking for the young male to reappear. He came up about twenty yards from them, heading toward the moose, still calmly browsing on the shore, and Three-Legs started after him with a speed that the poor female following after could not begin to attain.

The young male dived before Three-Legs overtook him, and the latter dived after him. The female swam on, no doubt following their course by the bubbles of air of their breath that they were constantly letting out. They reappeared close to the moose, Three-Legs apparently having

the young one by the throat, and the noise and splashing that they made disturbed the bull; he whisked about, his hair all bristling forward, like that of an angry dog, sloshed into the water, and trotted straight toward them, shaking menacingly his long, fuzzy-antlered head; they sank — whether separately or together we could not tell — and he stopped short, stared stupidly down for a moment, his nose almost touching the water, and then, with a final toss of his antlers, turned and waded ashore and disappeared in the brush.

The female beaver was now swimming around and around in a small circle, watching for her mate and his fierce pursuer to reappear. They erupted well out in the center of the lakelet, still fighting, and as she started toward them they sank again: she kept on, however, and upon arriving at the place where they had gone down, began circling around and around it.

Time passed; they did not reappear; we became very uneasy; and finally Star-Woman said: 'Almost-brother, I fear that we shall not see Three-Legs again! I believe that they are death-gripping one another out there in the deep water!'

'Three-Legs is very powerful; he will free himself! Don't worry; you will soon see him!' I told her.

More time passed, and I began to fear that the two fighters were dying; that they might be bleeding to death down at the bottom of the lakelet. The young female beaver ceased cutting circles and, treading water, whimpered more plaintively than ever for her mate. Then, suddenly, she started swimming swiftly toward the head of the lake: she had discovered, even before we did, a lone beaver swimming toward her. That part of the little sheet of water was in deep shadow; we could not make out which of the two fighters it was; but presently, with a loud slap of her tail, she dived, and we knew that the lone swimmer was Three-Legs!

Star Woman gripped my hand more firmly and whispered: 'Oh, oh! He has killed the new-married one, and will now take his wife!'

Three-Legs swam on swiftly to where the female had dived and then he flipped down out of sight. I know not whether it was by sight, or by bubble trail, or by mere chance that he followed her underwater course and popped up almost beside her close out from where we sat. Anyhow, he did it, and then began a chase that was short but furious while it lasted. Try as she would to escape, diving, coming up and twisting about, and even fighting, Three-Legs kept heading the poor female off in her

attempts to go up the lake. Her struggles soon became more and more feeble, and nosing her, pushing her to shallow water, and then crowding against her, he drove her out upon the shore, panting for breath, so weak that she dropped prone upon the sand. Three-Legs, never stopping, waddled around to her side and endeavored to nose her up to a sitting position.

'I-me-tus'ki!' (Dog-Face!) Star Woman hissed, the very worst swear-word in the Blackfeet language.

Three-Legs heard her; he sat up alertly. Already I was aiming at him: I fired and he dropped prone upon his captive. As we ran to seize our prize, she wormed her way out from under him and got into the water and, too weak to dive, slowly swam across to the opposite shore.

'At last we have him!' Star Woman cried, stooping and examining the beaver's battle-scarred head, and ruffling his cream-colored fur. She was trembling. I began reloading my rifle and found that my own hands were none too steady.

'O Sun! O Above One! You have pitied us!' she said, holding her hands to the sky. 'O Maker of the Days, here, now, we vow to sacrifice to you the skin of this, your own, your sacred animal!'

She turned to me and cried reproachfully: 'Oh,

why are you so silent? Why do you not also give thanks to Sun?'

'You have given thanks for me,' I answered.

'You don't realize what a great thing we have done; you most of all,' she said. 'You killed the white one! When the great lodge is built for Sun, you, not I, must have the greatest honor, you must sacrifice the skin to him for both of us.'

'I waited for you. I wanted you to kill the white one. You did not even take aim at him, so I had to fire. Why was that?' I asked.

'For good reason: I wanted you to kill him; you are now sure to have strong medicine. I shall tan the skin — oh, so soft; and when the time comes, you shall make the offering of it. Oh, how proud I shall be, standing there beside you, there before all the people, you making the prayer of sacrifice for us both! Promise that you will do it!'

'It shall be as you say,' I answered, and she laughed happily.

I handed her my rifle and said that I would carry the beaver. We turned for a last look at the lake. Lo! we saw a beaver swimming down it; the lone female on the opposite shore also saw his wake and swam to meet him. We wondered if he was her mate, in some way escaped from Three-Legs' long, sharp teeth, and now, at risk of his life, was return-

ing to look for her? It was he: they met, swam side by side to shore, and sat up. It was not so dark but we could see them lean together and rub cheeks.

'Oh, how happy they are; my heart goes out to them!' Star Woman exclaimed.

I grasped old Three-Legs' body by the tail — it was all of sixty pounds' weight — slung it upon my back, and we started for camp. The night soon became so dark that we had to feel our way down through the timber and brush to the head of the lake. Such going was not pleasant; carefully though we stepped, we frequently stumbled and fell. Now and then we heard something moving off ahead, or to one side of us; by the time we arrived at the shore of the lake, we were actually weak from fear. Well we knew that any one of the prowlers might be a grizzly!

We fairly ran, once we gained the sandy shore, and never stopped until we turned from it back into the timber and arrived at the little lodge. We hurried inside, carefully replaced the hide door curtain, and then, groping around, Star Woman got hold of a stick and exposed the bed of coals which she had so carefully covered with ashes, laid fresh sticks upon them, and we soon had a fire. She sat back from blowing it into flame and looked at me, wide-eyed, unsmiling.

'We have the sun-beaver; we have come safely through the dark timber; yet am I heavy-hearted; oppressed. I can just feel that bad luck is coming,' she said.

I had that feeling, too, but would not own it. 'It was our stumbling way in the darkness; the fear of the movers-about that we heard but could not see, that made you feel low-hearted. Take courage!' I told her.

She did not answer. I had never seen her so utterly dejected.

'Come!' I said. 'We have work to do: we must skin the white one now. Then we shall sleep, and with the first light of day take our back trail to the big lake. It may be that we shall find No Runner waiting for us, there in our lodge on the point!'

I sharpened my knife upon the steel that I always carried, and the girl helping me, soon got the deep-furred hide off the animal. She then got out her horn-handled, steel-edged flesher and stripped off all the fat and bits of flesh that coated it, folded it so that it would not dry out, and our work was done.

I went outside and looked at the position of the Big Dipper: the night was more than half gone. I stood there some time, listening intently to every rustling of the brush. Now and then a few sparks

soared up from the smoke-hole of the lodge. I went inside and saw that Star Woman had lain down and covered herself with her robe, and was apparently asleep. I smothered the fire with ashes and stretched out upon my couch. I was thoroughly tired, but determined not to sleep. I was bound that we should be upon our way down the valley as soon as we could see to travel.

CHAPTER XIV

STAR WOMAN CHANGES HER MIND

For once I kept my no-sleep promise to myself: never once during those long, before-morning hours did I close my eyes. I lay motionless all through them, listening intently to every faint rustling outside, and becoming more and more convinced that it was the sight of man that had frightened the bighorns; that enemies were in the valley, and probably not far from us. At last I made up my mind what to do.

'Almost-sister,' I called, my voice little above a whisper.

'Well?' she answered promptly.

'Ha! You were awake!'

'I have not slept this night. Well, what is it?' she answered.

'I think that we should leave here before daylight. Day is not far off, so let us go now,' I told her.

'We think alike. Have you, too, been lying awake, listening to every sound, fearing the approach of enemies?' she asked.

'Yes, I have been doing just that! Come, let us make up our little packs and go.'

'I will put the skin of the white one in my pack,' she said, and we groped about, collecting our few belongings and soon had them in two bundles.

'Are you ready to go?' I asked.

'Ready, except that we haven't sacrificed the body of the white one,' she answered, and in a voice so low that I could barely hear her, she made her plea: 'O Sun! We leave to you the body of this sacred animal. Pity us! Protect us from our enemies! Allow us to survive all dangers! Give us long life and happiness!'

Her voice died away in a whisper; she waited a moment and said to me reproachfully: 'Almost-brother!'

'Ah! Kim'ok-et-an-nan! Nuk'si-ka-mot-a-an-nan!' (Yes! Pity us! Let us survive!) I pleaded, and took up my pack and felt my way out of the lodge, she closely following me.

It was still black night in the timber, but I led the way down through it, not daring to take the easy way down along the open, sandy shore of the lake. So very dark was it that we were constantly getting entangled in fallen tree-tops and in patches of thick brush; consequently, our progress was very slow; we must have been all of an hour in going to the foot of the lake.

It was my intention to keep well off to the left of

the outlet, but the foliage of the pines was so dense overhead that I could not see the stars, and I went too much to the right. I entered a patch of very thick brush, Star Woman close behind me and retaining her hold on the tail of my blanket coat. The brush seemed to be venomously alive; to reach out and twine about my legs and push against my face.

I was minded to turn back; then thought that two or three steps more would take us through it. I pushed on and slumped straight off a cutbank, dragging the girl after me waist-deep into the stream. She shrieked as she came down upon my back and into the icy water, and somewhere below us a man's deep voice called out an alarm in words unintelligible to us, and was instantly answered by a number of strange, guttural calls!

We stood rigid there in the stream, the girl's left arm close around my neck; we heard the deep voice give an order of some kind, and then all was still except the murmuring of the stream and the drone of the waterfall some distance down it.

'Oh, Generous Raven! The enemy! What shall we do?' she whispered.

'They are on the left of the stream; we must cross and sneak out away from it. Be careful: we must not slip and splash the water,' I answered.

Maybe our hearts were not all aflutter as we moved inch by inch toward the other bank, feeling our way over the slippery stones, expecting every moment that the enemy would fire upon us! It seemed to me that we should never come to the other side, but we did, and with slow, noiseless steps crossed a sloping, sandy shore and entered open timber thickly carpeted with dead pine needles. We stopped and listened, but could hear nothing.

I drew the girl to me and whispered close in her ear: 'Feel the ground with your feet before you put them down. We must not step upon and snap a single stick!'

'Yes! I know,' she answered, and we went on straight away from the stream and with no noise whatever save the faint, the well-nigh inaudible rustle of our wet clothing. In this open timber I could see the stars and had no difficulty in keeping my course.

It was hard to resist the temptation to increase our pace, but we did resist it and stole slowly on and on until we began to ascend a steep slope and so knew that we had crossed the floor of the valley and were well beyond hearing of the war party. I then changed our course, heading for our camp on the point of the big lake. Day was now at hand.

In the increasing light we quickened our pace to a walk, then to a trot, and kept that up until, not very long after sunrise, we arrived at our lodge, standing just as we had left it, and, passing on, we dropped down upon the sandy lake shore to recover our breath.

'We can't rest here very long; no doubt the enemy are already on our trail,' I said.

'But we have come all the way upon high, dry ground; they can't follow it,' the girl objected.

'No; but we left plain trails along the stream when we went up it; they will follow them down, well knowing that we were heading for the place from which we started,' I explained.

'True! I never thought of that. And brother nowhere in sight, but maybe returning here to be discovered and killed by them!' she exclaimed.

'We must go in search of him and lose no time about it,' I said, and, tired as we were, we hurried back into the timber, took down the lodge-skin and packed it and the dried meat and all our belongings into the canoe, and paddled straight out until well beyond rifle range from shore.

'Now, then, tell me what you think best for us to do,' I said.

'I leave it to you,' she answered.

'We will go up the lake, keeping close enough to

this shore to see the raft if it is lodged anywhere along it,' I decided.

'Yes, that is best,' she agreed. 'If brother is dream-fasting anywhere along it, we must awaken him, make him come with us. That will be terribly bad for him, breaking his medicine fast, but it must be done.'

We paddled on for some time, watching the shore, looking back at the point to see if the enemy would appear upon it. Somewhere on ahead of us a gun boomed; the echoes crashed from rock wall to rock wall all up and down the valley.

'It is brother! He is signaling us!' Star Woman cried.

'Yes! But where is he? From which shore do you think the sound came?' I asked.

'No matter which one! Paddle hard; we shall soon know!' she answered, and we bent to our work, heading straight for the center of the narrows.

Presently another shot boomed out over the lake and echoed from crag to crag, and this time we located it; somewhere in the bay formed by the right point of the narrows. I took up my rifle and answered it, reloaded, and we went on. We were soon to meet our dream-faster. All was well: more than well with us; our tongues were loosened.

Said my almost-sister: 'Generous Raven, do you realize what powerful medicine we have?'

'Well,' said I, 'perhaps you will now tell me what you were praying for up there at the other lake — what it is that you so much desire?'

She gave a sudden start; all but dropped her paddle into the water; she was silent for a long time, and finally answered, so low that I could barely hear her: 'Do not ask me that. I cannot tell you what it is!'

'I know what it is. I desire it as much as you do. Yes, more than you do; far more,' I said.

'Oh, hush! Pity me! Say no more about it!' she pleaded.

We paddled silently on, quartering up across the lake, and after a time saw No Runner on the shore of the bay. He stood up and waved his blanket to attract our attention, and we waved our paddles and plied them more vigorously. While we were still far out from shore, he shouted: 'Have you the white one?'

'Yes! We have him!' I yelled, and the great rock-walled ledge behind him echoed my words. He heard them plainly and raised the victory song and danced about upon the hard sand. We drew in to shore and he ran to meet us as we sprang out, and embraced us.

'Oh, the gods are good to us!' he cried. 'You have the white one! I have that which I sought! Almost-brother, sister, I have a powerful medicine helper! Quick! Let me see the skin of the white one!'

'Wait. The skin is safe enough in that pack. We have other news for you: almost we ran into a war party last night; they are somewhere in that side valley; we must plan what to do,' I said, and hurriedly told him about our narrow escape from walking right into the party.

Just as his sister had done, he declared that in this, as in all that had happened to us at the Inside Lakes, the gods revealed their guiding power, their goodness to us.

'Well, what shall we do now?' Star Woman asked.

'Entice the enemy this way, and when night comes paddle as fast as we can go down to our people and give the alarm,' he answered.

We quickly planned it all out. We were quite certain that the enemy had come down the valley to the point below, and had seen Star Woman and me paddling up the lake and had heard No Runner's shots. We had to make them believe that we had come home to the camp of our people, and to that end we went back into the timber and built a

number of fires; the thin columns of smoke rising straight up from them through the tree-tops looked just like the smoke from so many lodge-fires. We were sure that, as soon as the enemy saw them, they would go down to the foot of the lake and at nightfall cross the outlet and come up to raid the horse herds of the camp that they believed was here. We kept the fires going all day and while feeding them we had plenty of time to eat and talk over our experiences and by turns to take some much-needed sleep. We occasionally fired a gun in order to make our work of deception more complete.

Between us, Star Woman and I told No Runner all that had happened to us in our quest of Three-Legs, and he then told us his experiences.

'Sister, almost-brother, my dream-fasting experience was very terribly wonderful,' he began. 'As soon as I lay down upon the raft and you pushed it off from shore, I closed my eyes and began to pray to the gods. I must have soon slept. When I opened my eyes, the night was very dark. I could hear nothing but the faint roar of far-off waterfalls and now and then the calling of owls. But presently something splashed the water quite close to me; not loudly, as a beaver slaps the water with his tail; whatever this was, it circled

around and around the raft, making the water gurgle, and sometimes ripple against the logs. I said to myself that it was probably an Under-Water Person. I was terribly afraid of him. I prayed him not to harm me; prayed the gods to protect me. I heard a long, breath-expelling sigh, and knew that the swimmer was just what I had believed him to be. I prayed harder than ever: actually the fear that was within me made me tremble so that the raft quivered. I heard him climb out upon the end of the raft beyond my head, and before I could make up my mind what to do, he splashed back into the water and I heard him no more. After a time I ceased trembling, but fear was still with me. I lay listening for the swimmer to return, praying constantly, and at last again fell asleep.

'That night I had no dream. When I awoke at daylight, I found that my raft was against the rock wall of the point above here, on the other side of the lake. I had drifted a long way. I did not push out from the wall. I said to myself that I was in the hands of the gods; whither they directed the raft to drift, thither would I drift. Before sunrise I drank, and lay down again and never moved until after sunset, when I drank again. I was very hungry during that day. I slept some. A little

breeze came up, and I drifted across the lake and touched shore. Night fell, and when I leaned over the side of the raft to drink, I saw that I was drifting slowly out from shore. I was very hungry. I prayed a long time; heard much distant splashing in the water. I did not now much fear the swimmers, the Under-Water People. One of them had swam around and around me the previous night, and even climbed upon the end of my raft; as he had not harmed me, I reasoned that the gods would continue to protect me from him and all his kind.

'Dreams I had that night, but awoke always before I — my shadow — could have any talk with the creature that I saw in my dream-wanderings. Came daylight and I saw that I was out in the lake not far below the island. Hunger had left me. I was not even thirsty, but I drank just before the sun appeared. With the sunrise came a slight wind that made the raft drift slowly down the lake. I bethought me to pray also to Wind-Maker for medicine help, and prayed to him a long time. I slept some during the day. I cried out to the loons and the ducks upon the lake, to the eagles and hawks above, to some bighorns and goats that I saw upon the mountain-sides, asking them all to help me. Some time past noon I awoke from one

of my sleeps and saw that the raft was resting against the sloping, sandy shore on the other side of this point. There it remained until near dark, when it drifted out again. As soon as the sun went down behind the mountains, I leaned out to drink and some large bubbles coming up from the black, deep water burst right in my face.

'"Oh, you, breathing away down there in the depths, be you my medicine helper!" I cried, and then shivered, for it came to me that I might have made a great mistake; perhaps I had asked help of a too-dreadful creature of the deep water. I lay back upon my couch and prayed to Sun, and after a time I fell asleep.

'It was past midnight when I awoke. I heard splashings all around me. Owls were hooting near by, so I knew that I was not far out from shore. I prayed to the gods a very long time, entreating them this night to give me my medicine dream. It was not until near morning that I slept again. This time, in my dream, I remained right upon my couch on the raft, instead of wandering about upon the land and calling to all the animals I saw for help. Oh, sister! Almost-brother! Listen; this is what happened. A voice called out to me, "Well, you asked me for help; here I am, come up from the depths to tell you that I have long watched your

life and know that you are worth helping. I will be your medicine."

'"Who are you? Where are you?" I asked.

'"I am here, right near you, here in the mist. I am the shadow of Water-Bull ——"'

'Oh, no! Brother! Not dread Water-Bull!' Star Woman cried.

'Yes, he! Hush! Kill now and forever what tales you have heard about him! He is not the terrible, people-destroying, huge, across-wide-rivers-stepping Water-Bull of our old women's children-scaring tales!

'Well, I looked in the direction of the sound of the voice; there was thick mist. It rolled and heaved and twisted up from the water close in front of me, and I caught glimpses in it of a dark-furred animal ten times larger than a buffalo bull. But at no time could I see more than a small part of it, just a glimpse now of a portion of the back, then of a leg, once of the tip of a huge black horn, and that was all.

'"Oh, Water-Bull! Do you really mean it — that you will be my helper?" I cried.

'"Just that! When you pray to Sun, call upon me, too, for help, and I will help you, always help you so long as you lead a good life."

'"That I shall always try to do," I answered.

'"I know that you will, else I should not have come at your call for help. Take courage, be of good and brave heart; when you need me, call for my help," he said, and with a loud splash into the mist-covered water was gone.

'At that my shadow came back into my body. I awoke, and saw that there was a thick mist all around the raft. Day was breaking. I was very happy. I gave thanks to the gods — to Water-Bull himself for my dream. Soon the sun appeared over the mountain-top and wiped out the mist, and I saw that I was far out upon the lake. I seized a large branch, stripped it of its twigs, and used it as a paddle, a very poor one. I was a very long time getting the raft to shore. I sprang from it as soon as it touched the rocks, and found a trail that took me down along the side of the mountain and across the base of this point, and then I saw you in the canoe and fired my rifle, and you came. There! I have told you all!'

'Oh, wonderful! Wonderful! I am glad that you have this powerful medicine helper!' Star Woman exclaimed. And I, too, told him that I was pleased at the success of his dream-fasting.

In the folklore tales of the Blackfeet there is considerable about the animal of No Runner's vision, the su-yi'stum-ik, or water-bull. I am in-

clined to the belief that the tales have been handed down from generation to generation from very remote, probably pre-glacial time, and that they have to do with one of the animals of that time — the mammoth, most likely.

Well, while we talked, feasted upon dried moose meat, and kept our make-believe lodge-fires going, we also kept a good watch upon the point down across the lake, but saw nothing of the enemy; nor did we really expect to see them; war parties make it a point to see without being seen. We did not doubt but this one had long since discovered the smoke of our little fires, and had already crossed the valley at the foot of the lake, and with the falling of night would be coming up the trail. Just before sunset we replenished the fires for the last time, then got into the canoe and very slowly moved out along the edge of the rock wall to the end of the point and turned into a short, narrow break in it. There we rested quietly until night, when we pushed out and noiselessly paddled down the lake.

A couple of hours later we passed down the outlet into the lower lake without one mishap and then, plying the paddles with all our strength, we hurried on down it and landed upon the shore in front of the great camp, still all yellowly aglow with the light of the fires illuminating the leather

lodge-skins. During the day Star Woman had laced the white beaver skin into a willow hoop drying-frame, and we had agreed upon the manner of our triumphal entry into camp. She now took up the stretched skin and led the way, No Runner and then I following, and we raised the victory song as we left the shore, raised it high above the confused hum of the people.

They heard us at once, paused for one breathless moment to listen, and we abruptly ended the song, and chanted:

'Ap-i-ksis'stuk-i, ni-kai'nit-a-an-an, oh-hai!
oh-hai!'

Which is to say: 'White beaver, we killed him, oh, yes! oh, yes!'

Four times we chanted the line, and then no more, for the shouts of the people as they came rushing from their lodges to greet us drowned our voices. They crowded around us, questioning, all talking at once, all but smothering us, until Mad Plume and then Big Lake himself came thrusting their way toward us and ordering them to fall back and be silent.

'Oh, my children! You have it, the white one!' Mad Plume cried, embracing first Star Woman, and then No Runner and me.

'Yes! Yes! Here it is, father,' the girl answered, and handed him the skin. He led the way with it to the nearest lodge from which the firelight streamed out through the open doorway; the beautiful fur gleamed white in it; all near enough to see it uttered low cries of astonishment.

'A wonderful Sun sacrifice it will be! A sacrifice that will bring Sun favor upon every man, woman, and child of us!' Big Lake shouted.

'Yes! Yes! And my children secured it! Come! My children, come home and let us hear all about it!' Mad Plume cried.

'Wait! We have to tell you about a war party!' said No Runner.

'Ha! A war party! Listen! Listen, you warriors!' Big Lake shouted.

In the silence that followed, No Runner told all about our discovery of the enemy, and where we believed they could be found.

The moment he finished, the chiefs of the different bands of the All Friends Society began calling to their men to prepare to go in search of the enemy; there was a wild rush for arms and for horses, and at last we were free to go our way. Antoine and Henri and their women, standing near by, now came to me in the thinning crowd and hurried me to our lodge, and No Runner and Star

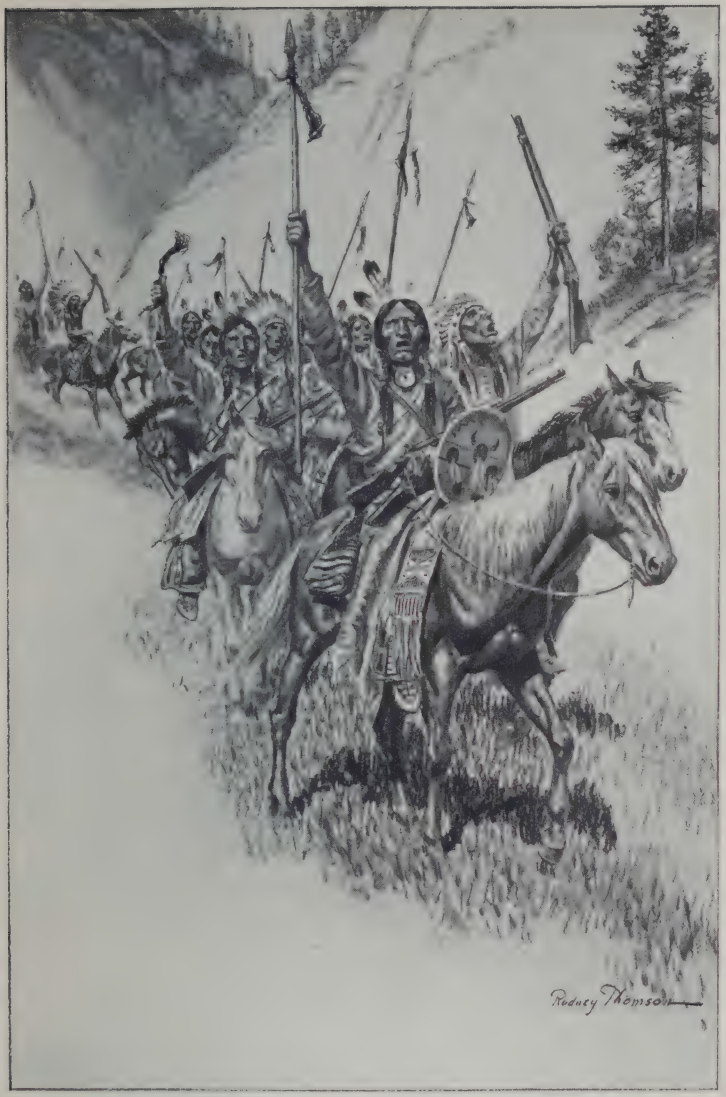
Woman went with Mad Plume. People crowded in, and more stood close outside to hear me tell our adventures, and a still larger crowd was gathered at Mad Plume's lodge listening to No Runner's story of it all.

Never had I seen the great camp so thoroughly aroused, so enthusiastically excited; not on account of the proximity of an enemy war party — that was common enough — but because we had brought home a Sun offering that was — next to the hide and tongue of a white buffalo — the most acceptable present that could be given to the great Maker of the Days. None but the children and the very aged slept that night; the lodge-fires were kept going, and around them the people rejoiced; they felt that they were one with their shining, beneficent, life-giving sky god. And when, on the following day, the warriors returned with the scalps and weapons of seventeen Pend d'Oreilles, the war party that we had nearly run into, they declared that this was but a foretaste of Sun favor that possession of the white beaver skin would bring to the tribe.

Camp was broken a few days after our return to it and we moved south along the foot-of-the-mountains trail to the mouth of Cutbank Canyon,

where, all up and down the stream, we found many ponds that were fairly alive with beavers. No Runner and I trapped together, as usual, but Star Woman went no more with us; she had tanned the white beaver skin, and was now embroidering a sun of colored porcupine quills upon the flesh side of it. Below the sun were to be four embroidered bands across the hide, these representing the four world directions.

Nor did the girl make our lodge her second home as had been her custom. From the time of our return with the skin of the sacred beaver, Mad Plume would hardly let her out of his sight; he and the two old medicine men, Talks-with-the-Buffalo and Old Sun, talked to her every evening about the wonderful life she would have as a virgin warrior woman, prayed for her, and urged her to make her warrior vow to Sun. And now that she went abroad no more with my almost-brother and me, I realized as never before what she was to me — everything! I could not bear the thought of her becoming a warrior woman. I wanted her to be my wife! I hated the very sight of those two old medicine men, wending their way to Mad Plume's lodge every evening to urge her to vow herself to Sun. I lost all interest in trapping and hunting, and finally, one morning, told No Runner that I was



THE WARRIORS RETURNED WITH THE SCALPS AND
WEAPONS OF SEVENTEEN PEND D'OREILLES

indisposed — which was true enough — and that he would have to make the round of our traps alone.

As soon as he and Henri and Antoine went out and rode away, I turned to Eagle Woman and Grouse Woman.

'Almost-mothers, I must tell you what is in my heart. I love your sister!' I cried.

'Ha! Generous Raven, that is not news to us. We have long known that you love her, and we know, too, that she loves you,' Grouse Woman answered.

'I am sure that she does. She has told you?' I said.

'No; she has not told us, nor did she need to. Who, seeing you together, could help knowing what you are to one another! Why, we knew that you loved before you knew it yourselves. Yes, and our men know it, and your almost-brother and our mother know it.'

'And does Mad Plume know it?' I asked.

'No,' said Eagle Woman.

'I don't want to be the one to tell him about it; his anger will be something terrible!' the other exclaimed.

We talked the matter over for a long time, but could see no way for the girl and me to attain our desire.

That evening, after Henri and Antoine and No Runner had returned and were resting after a hard day's work, I saw Grouse Woman urgently nudge her sister several times. I knew what was coming. I wanted to get up and run out. I couldn't. I knew that I was blushing; that my cheeks were as red as the fire, and bent over to hide my face.

'Well, my men, well, brother, it is out at last: Generous Raven, here, has been telling us that he loves our little sister,' Eagle Woman exclaimed.

'And we expect the three of you to go to father and talk for them,' Grouse Woman added.

'Ha! Here comes trouble!' Henri exclaimed.

'No. All they have to do is to run off to the North Blackfeet and remain with them until father gets over his anger!' said No Runner.

'Oh, no! Not that!' the sisters cried.

'No! Of course not! We will do this right or not at all. I am not afraid of Mad Plume. I will go right now and ask him to allow the young ones to marry,' said Antoine.

'I am with you,' said Henri.

'I will go ahead and let mother know that you are coming,' No Runner told them and slipped out of the lodge.

The men waited a moment or two, to give their mother-in-law time to avoid meeting them, and

then, with a few words of encouragement to me, they too went out. The women and I remained silent, motionless upon our couches, expecting, dreading to hear Mad Plume roar out his anger when he learned the cause of their visit. Time passed; we heard nothing but the low murmur of voices in the chief's lodge, which was quite near ours.

'It may be,' said Grouse Woman, at last, 'that our men have become afraid-hearted. I can't sit here any longer. I am going to listen outside to what is being said.'

Eagle Woman followed her out and I was left alone. I dared not go with them to listen. I did not want to hear Mad Plume tell my friends that under no circumstances would he allow me to have his daughter. I felt very sad, very lonely, sitting there by myself; the future looked very empty, very dreary to me.

Well, I may as well tell you now what happened there in the other lodge. Henri and Antoine entered it and Mad Plume welcomed them, gave them the places of honor upon his couch, and filled and lighted a big pipe.

As soon as it was started upon the round of the circle, Antoine said to him: 'Chief, we have come to tell you something; but before we do it, we ask

you to promise that you will not become angry, and that you will listen to all that we have to say.'

'Ha! It must be that I am to hear bad news of some kind! Well, I promise to do what you ask. Speak!' Mad Plume answered.

'It is this,' he replied. 'Generous Raven wants to have a home of his own with Star Woman. Wait, now; I have not done. You know yourself what a good, brave, honest, and truthful youth he is; he loves your daughter very much; will be good to her. I advise you to let him have her!'

'My son, you ask the impossible,' Mad Plume replied. 'You know as well as I do that my daughter is to become a sacred warrior woman; that she will never be any man's woman. Well, I am sorry for Generous Raven. But you see how it is. Of course he will soon get over his disappointment. And as to my daughter, her mind is fixed upon preparing to take her vow to Sun, and upon nothing else. She does not love the youth ——'

'But I do love him! I am not ashamed to say it!' Star Woman cried. 'And I can never become a warrior woman; never, never shall I be able to face an enemy.'

'How do you know that?' her father sternly demanded.

'Thus: The night that Generous Raven and I nearly walked right in among the war party, I almost died of fright when they called to one another. But for him I should have shrieked and shrieked. He saved me. Oh, my father! If you love me, let me lead the life that I am fitted to live. Let Generous Raven be my man.'

They said that Mad Plume did not hesitate when he heard that pitiful appeal. 'Well, daughter, have your way about it. And so vanishes my great desire,' he answered, and sinking wearily back upon his couch, he signed that the talk was ended.

Thereafter for four days, according to the ancient custom of her people, Star Woman brought my meals to me, halting at the doorway of the lodge and passing in the food, so I had but passing glimpses of her during that time and never a word with her. Her mother and Mad Plume's other wives, meantime, were hurriedly making a lodge for us. On the fourth day it was completed, set up, and furnished, and in the late afternoon Grouse Woman and Eagle Woman carried my various belongings to it, and at sundown I went in and sat upon my couch. A small fire was burning and I replenished it.

Star Woman did not come until night had fallen. She quietly slipped in, dropped the door curtain in

place behind her, stood motionless for a moment, then ran and took her place at my right and kissed me.

'At last! Oh, my man! Here we are together, never to part,' she whispered.

'Never! Oh, what happiness!' I said.

Ha! Happiness? That but feebly expresses the full life we have had together. For twenty perfect years we roamed the plains, following the buffalo until they were exterminated. Then we settled here at the foot of these great mountains, and here we shall live on in peaceful happiness until, as she says, we cease to breathe and our shadows quietly take the trail to the Sand Hills.

Kyi! Kiyiye! — which is to say:

THE END

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